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GERMAN FREEDOM AND THE GREEK IDEAL

The Cultural Legacy from Goethe to Mann

William J. McGrath
Edited by Celia Applegate, Stephanie Frontz, & Suzanne Marchand

Palgrave Studies in Cultural and Intellectual History

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German Freedom and the Greek Ideal

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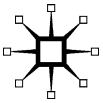

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The editors would like to dedicate this book to the memory of Bill McGrath, who was not quite ready to let it go; we hope he would have been happy with our finishing touches.

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Editors' Acknowledgments

This book goes out into the world thanks to Bill McGrath's widow, Stephanie Frontz, the Art Librarian and Head of the Art/Music Library at the University of Rochester, whose own acknowledgements page follows this one. After his untimely death, she was able to recover his latest version of all the chapters from files in his computer, to reassemble his books and research materials, and to realize (in the musical sense of filling in the lines of harmony that make the melody ring forth) the footnotes. It is her book as well as his in those terms, but it is also hers because there is no question but that Bill would have written the line, "For Stephanie," on the dedication page, had he lived to complete the manuscript. It is her act of selfless generosity to have opted to turn around that dedication, and to devote the volume to his memory.

As her assistant editors and on her behalf, we would like to thank the excellent advice and extraordinary generosity of time devoted to the effort to complete this project from Bill's friends, colleagues, and the readers for Palgrave/Macmillan. Early on, Douglas Morris, his former graduate student at the University of Rochester, volunteered to read the manuscript and then offered valuable advice to us about what we might do by way of introducing it. Bill's friend and former colleague from the time when both taught at Northwestern University James Sheehan and fellow intellectual historian Gerald Izenberg were also of tremendous help in bringing this project to full realization. Vanderbilt graduate students Cassandra Painter and Christopher Mapes helped talk through what we might say about a "cultural Sonderweg" and troll libraries, virtual and otherwise, for missing sources for textual references. Harry Francis Mallgrave, Semper's modern biographer, and Daniel Weiss at the Institute für Theorie und Geschichte der Architektur in Zurich both gave generous assistance in the effort to find sources for quotations from Semper's works. Ralph Locke, Bill's colleague in Rochester at the Eastman School of Music, served as musicologist-consultant on the Wagner chapter during the time when Bill was writing it. Throughout this process, Stewart Weaver, Bill's colleague and chair of the History

Department at the time of Bill's death, has provided support for the project and has allowed us to draw on his eloquent eulogy at Bill's memorial service to enrich the introduction.Finally, we are delighted to see this volume joining the distinguished books already published in the Palgrave Studies in Cultural and Intellectual History and would like to thank Chris Chappell and Sarah Whalen for the opportunity to put a fitting capstone on the distinguished, path-breaking, and untimely-cut-short career of William J. McGrath. We wish he could have seen it in print.

Celia Applegate
Vanderbilt University

Suzanne Marchand
Louisiana State University

Stephanie's Acknowledgments

I did not write this book. For 10 years, I observed my husband as he pursued the act of writing, thinking, rethinking, and closely reading the works of the five German thinkers discussed therein. At times he shared his joy of discovery, especially when it involved Wagner's Ring Cycle. Some couples listen to books on tape or CD while taking long car trips—we listened to Deryck Cooke's analysis of the Ring. Bill explained why he put off writing a conclusion for this work—if he wrote the conclusion, it would be finished and he'd need to find a new project. He'd grown very attached to this one.

I'm deeply indebted to Celia Applegate and Suzanne Marchand for their support for this book. From the moment I shared the manuscript with Celia, who was eager to show it to Suzanne, they expressed great interest in it. After the outside readers returned with positive comments, Suzanne said she'd like to include it in her Palgrave series on Cultural and Intellectual History. I couldn't have completed this project without their knowledgeable support and scholarly contributions.

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And last but not least, to Katherine McGrath, our daughter, who watched with some trepidation as I took on the conversion of her father's intellectual work into this book. Thank you for being supportive and encouraging while continually reminding me of Bill.

Editors' Introduction

William McGrath had completed nearly all but the footnotes of *German Freedom and the Greek Ideal: The Cultural Legacy from Goethe to Mann* when he died suddenly in November 2008 at age 71. He had been working on the book for a number of years, teaching on its subject at the University of Rochester, sharing parts of it with colleagues, revising and rethinking it, and at the end of 2008, he was almost ready to let it go out into the world. This editors' introduction, which precedes his own, is intended both to place this book in the context of his other scholarly writing and to expand on his own account of what his book sets out to achieve. Although we cannot be certain what changes or additions he might have made to these chapters in the final stages of revision and review, we try in this introduction to explain the choice of subjects and texts and to articulate the composite concept of "German freedom" that emerges from his analysis of them. We also provide a fuller account of the German philhellenism out of which the views of these men emerged, and we conclude with speculations on what kind of a "special path" of German development these investigations suggest.

German Freedom and the Greek Ideal is at once a work with strong ties to McGrath's previous writings, in terms of both themes and methods, and a work that marks a significant change from them. McGrath had established his reputation in 1974 with the publication of *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria*.[1] Already in this volume he demonstrated his depth and range as an intellectual and cultural historian. The book worked across genres, describing the links between the charismatic efforts at mass mobilization organized by the Austrian socialist Viktor Adler, the experiments in plumbing the Dionysian depths pursued by Sigmund Freud, and the symphonic primitivism achieved by Gustav Mahler. It showed how much of what we know as "modernism" was born in-turn-of-the-century Vienna. McGrath's landmark cultural history was dedicated to Carl Schorske and reflected the influence of his *Doktorvater*'s approach to the entwinement of politics and culture.[2] With his careful, nuanced weaving together of context and text, McGrath demonstrated the capacity of Schorske's approach to provide insight into what we might call the "lived experience"

of the crucial generation of creative people working after Wagner, after Nietzsche, and indeed after Marx. This generation was the first to take stock fully of the cultural legacy that McGrath explores here in *German Freedom and the Greek Ideal*. Seeking an alternative to the liberalism that they had come to find "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable" for living fully in the world, the members of the Pernerstorfer circle first embraced Wagner, then worked back from him to take in Schopenhauer and forward from him to Nietzsche, who was then a young man like themselves, seemingly articulating in *The Birth of Tragedy* and "Schopenhauer as Educator" the intellectual foundations for their own revolt. The "creation of a new, artistically vital culture" was to be their great project, a culture that would be a "community celebration uniting all classes" and which would replace the "fragmented and excessively rational" culture of their fathers.[3]

McGrath moved from there, naturally enough, to a fuller exploration of the psychological moorings of such aspirations. Freud was in the air at the University of Rochester in those days, and McGrath helped to create his own version of the Pernerstorfer circle, along with fellow historian Christopher Lasch (then working on the *Culture of Narcissism* and later *The Minimal Self*) and colleagues from the departments of Religion, Sociology, and Psychology, to study the works of Freud. They called themselves, somewhat more prosaically, the Psycho-Dynamic Study Group. When McGrath came to write about Freud, he positioned himself as a "scholar who pursues the historical development of Freud's thought" and examined Freud's "personal and political development in conjunction with his political dreams, recorded in *The Interpretation of Dreams*." In so doing he found himself suddenly thrust—albeit in the compatible company of Carl Schorske, who was then working through similar territory—into the snake pit of Freudian scholarship.[4] *Central European History* published his article on "Freud as Hannibal" along with a critical response from social scientist/psychologists Stanley Rothman and Phillip Isenberg and his own "reply" to the response.[5] In the latter, with great vigor and eloquence, he defended the historical approach. Wryly remarking that after reading the Freudians' critique of his account of Freud, he felt "like the woman who went before Solomon to complain that her baby had been stolen," McGrath argued for scholarship on Freud that did not simply analyze him through his own terms—"sublimation," "repression," and so on. The more neutral method of close readings of texts and contexts could help establish causation and connection, in

this case of "just how [Freud's] early revolutionary political impulses are transformed into . . . . . revolutionary scientific theories." McGrath also highlighted the theme of freedom in Freud's writings, emphasizing that in Freud's interpretation of his Hollthurn dream he "was transforming political freedom into psychological freedom" and in his "revolutionary dream" tracing a path from "political frustration to psychological theory."[6] The goal of the intellectual historian emerges in this defense as one of investigating . . . "important elements of the creative process through which important scientific theories or discoveries come about." "It seems to me," he concluded, "that while history has much to say about where these ideas come from it is not up to historians to concern themselves with their truth or falsity."[7] We will return to this observation later.

Freud's Discovery of Psychoanalysis: The Politics of Hysteria was the book that provided the fullest defense of a historical-cultural explanation of the origins of psychoanalysis. Scholars have approached the effort to explain how psychoanalysis came about from many different angles and methodological traditions—through linguistic analysis, through an examination of its biological roots, and so on—but McGrath provided the most complete account of the political dimensions of Freud's work and its status as a creative, perhaps even constructive, response to the authoritarian milieu of his own times. When he came to write his landmark "historicist" response to the work of the Freudians, John Toews would rely heavily on McGrath's close, contextual readings of Freud's innovations.[8] While this effort might seem to have carried McGrath far away from the legacy of Wagner and Nietzsche, let alone the Greeks whom both so admired, McGrath showed in the book that the myths, histories, and religious legends that occupied Freud's conscious and unconscious mind were the means to understand one's relationship to the world. They were, to put it in terms closer to those explored in *German Freedom and the Greek Ideal*, the model of human creativity, the giver of norms, and the inspiration to the freedom of full self-expression and understanding. Since the publication of McGrath's book, numerous other scholars—including Schorske himself—have explored Freud's interest in and reliance on these ancient myths and models.[9]

Nor was the ancient and classical world the only cultural legacy that McGrath explored in Freud's development. In a tour de force analysis of Freud's Dream of the Stately House, he revealed the layers of musical reference in the dream, beginning with the point of origin

in the *Burschenschaft* song "*Wir hatten gebauet ein staatliches Haus*" of 1819, a lament for the forcible dissolution of the Jena *Burschenschaft* after the Karlsbad Decrees and an exhortation to hold together under the banner of Schwarz-Rot-Gold, the banner of German freedom. Brahms took up the tune in his Academic Festival Overture of 1880, and Mahler provided a dark minor version of it as the opening of his Third Symphony. In McGrath's analysis, the tune fragment revealed layers of political engagement, musical experience, and the breakthroughs and frustrations of his own work: cultural legacy as the interior drama of the soul.[10]

Finally having investigated Freud's dreams, McGrath turned to gaze directly at the people who inhabited them, people who had for all his own life as a mature scholar stood in the foreground of his own intellectual passions and in the background of the canvases he painted. McGrath was a legendary teacher of European intellectual history at the University of Rochester, where he had regularly taught a seminar on European thought in the nineteenth century, a neutral enough title but a course, as he taught it, that explored precisely this "cultural legacy of artistic and intellectual brilliance" from Kant to Mann. All these thinkers are, of course, complex figures, but through this complexity, McGrath charted a particular course which highlighted the themes of freedom and creativity that had been so important for his fin-de-siècle Austrians. The students may not always have been aware of why he taught these thinkers in particular or how weighty were the implications of such themes articulated in the German context, and they were almost certainly unaware that he was working out such issues in this project. Yet the group of writers and artists fits together, not as a chronological sequence nor as an extended exploration of German idealism and/or German romanticism but as an accumulation of wide-ranging efforts to articulate how the Greeks were free and how this freedom could be realized in modern civilization.

But why should the ancient Greeks be an integral element in the German idea of freedom? Although written with enviable clarity, McGrath's manuscript leaves unspoken some of the reasons for this linkage, reasons that are rooted in the eighteenth-century context in which he begins. In the middle of that century, ancient Greece began to assert its uniqueness and originality over and against several cultural models central to Europe's Old Regimes, most importantly, the French and Austrian Baroque (associated with courtly politeness, the Roman Catholic Church, and an older model of learnedness without

depth). Greece's world of sun and bodies was also juxtaposed in some contexts to the austere and morally restrictive world of the ancient Israelites, a model integrated into English and American Puritanism. The mid-eighteenth century saw the appearance of some of the first "national" histories of Greece as well as the publication of James Stuart and Nicholas Revett's *Antiquities of Athens* (1762), Jean-Jacques Barthélemy's sensationally popular *Journey of the Young Anarcharsis in Greece* (4 vols., 1787), which celebrated the glories of Greece); a multivolume edition of Herodotus by the French scholar Pierre-Henri Larcher (1786); and most importantly for the Germans, the publications of Johann Joachim Winckelmann on Greek art and of Friedrich August Wolf on Homer. By the 1790s, Germany's leading poets and philosophers had become passionate philhellenes, and Wolf had taken the daring step of divorcing himself (and classical philology in general) from the great "mother" science to which it had so long been officially subordinated, theology. Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, Friedrich Schlegel, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Friedrich Hölderlin, just to name a few, had fallen under the spell of an ancient Greece constructed in a particular manner, and that was to be a model for a politically divided but increasingly culturally ambitious Germany.

To explain why this generation looked so far back in time and what they found, we must briefly consider the lessons Winckelmann and Wolf offered. Winckelmann, who was spectacularly murdered in 1768 by a homosexual lover on board a boat headed for Trieste, had developed a passion for ancient art despite his family's attempts to make him a pastor or medical doctor. He spent formative years between 1748 and 1755 as a curator of the library of Count Heinrich von Brünau in Nöthnitz near Dresden, and in 1755 published an epoch-making little book entitled *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture*. In it, he recommended that his contemporaries take classical sculptures as the models for a purer, more natural, form of art. His antagonists were clearly the practitioners of Baroque decoration and effects. In the same year this book appeared Winckelmann decamped to Rome, where he could work amongst the monuments; it was here that he wrote the book that has been described as the first true history of art, *The History of Art in Antiquity*, published in 1764. This book proved sensationally popular among German elites, especially after Winckelmann's dramatic death just four years later. In it Winckelmann—a close reader of Montesquieu—claimed that Greek art was uniquely beautiful because it was produced by a beautiful

people, who inhabited an ideally temperate climate. Their art was neither mere reflection of nature nor mere artistic imagination but a unique harmonization of nature and culture, in which naturally existing, beautiful fragments were joined together and harmonized by aesthetic ideals, just as the painter Zeuxis had reputedly formed a sculpture of Helen of Troy by blending parts of five real women into one perfect female figure. Periclean Athens was Winckelmann's model for Greek greatness (his was always an Attic-centered Greek ideal, as compared to Rousseau's fascination with Sparta), and he celebrated, with Herodotus, Athens' achievement of "full freedom" after the Persian Wars, and before the Alexandrian and Roman conquests, as the foundation for Greek artistic excellence. In a key passage Winckelmann claimed: "With regard to the constitution and government of Greece, freedom was the chief reason for their art's superiority." But his next passages rather muddied the waters: "Freedom always had its seat in Greece, even beside the thrones of kings, who ruled paternally before the enlightenment of reason allowed the people to taste the sweetness of full freedom . . . Though tyrants installed themselves soon after, they succeeded only in their native lands, and the entire nation never recognized a sole ruler. Thus, the right to be great among his people never rested on one person alone, nor could one person immortalize himself to the exclusion of others."[11] Though the brilliant art historian Alex Potts reads Winckelmann's statements as radical, or even proto-Jacobin pronouncements,[12] one suspects that McGrath would have found this passage compatible with the German idea of freedom, and not at all displeasing to the Protestant princes of the Holy Roman Empire.

Winckelmann's analysis in *The History of the Art of Antiquity* was based heavily on sculpture (and on coins and engraved gemstones), in part because no clearly attested Greek paintings had survived (except in mosaic form).[13] But Winckelmann's love for Greek sculpture was more than that. For him, as for most members of his generation, life-sized, nude sculpture of the sort typified by the Apollo Belvedere or the Laocoon represented the pinnacle of artistic achievement; by representing in veristic and yet beautiful form the most divine of nature's creations, the human body, sculpture applied art to nature in an exemplary way. The purity of the white marble, given life by a race of Pygmalian sculptors, seemed to reflect and recapitulate the process of God's creation of humankind. If there is actual artwork that fits Kant's description of the beautiful in the *Critique*

of Judgment it is nude, Greek sculpture—and through the rhapsodic accounts of Winckelmann and the philosophical justifications of Kant, Greek sculpture became the ideal type upon which the nineteenth-century German aesthetic taste was formed. The neoclassical architecture of Karl Friedrich Schinkel would define the "look" of the new Berlin, and Ludwig I, King of Bavaria (r. 1825–1848) would populate his capital city and his countryside with imposing Greek-style monuments, including the Walhalla temple, and the great museum for ancient sculpture completed in 1830, the Glyptothek. It would be this German monarch's second son who would serve as king of modern Greece between 1832 and 1862, and fill Athens, too, with neoclassical architecture (designed by German architects).[14]

If Winckelmann provided an aesthetic interpretation of Greek greatness, linking it to Athenian freedom and the requirement that the ideal should unite the naturally formed parts, Friedrich August Wolf made the Homeric epics the model for a national folk-poetry, and classical philology the means by which to establish nonclerical intellectuals and scholars as the interpreters and perpetuators of that poetic voice. Wolf's argument about the composition of the Homeric poems, articulated in his *Prolegomena to the Study of Homer* (1795), is complex, but boils down to a presumption that "Homer" might well have been a fictional personal, nothing more than what Michel Foucault called "the author function," and that thus the real genius of the poems were to be understood as the expression of a national voice. Wolf's argument drew on contemporary Old Testament studies, which conceived Moses as the vessel into which the national poetry of the ancient Israelites had been poured, and complemented the earlier work of his friend J. G. Herder on folk songs.[15] Later work on the *Nibelungenlied*, which would fascinate Richard Wagner, evolved from this discussion of national folk epics, composed not by individual intellectuals but by the people as a whole. Wolf's work also dovetailed nicely with Friedrich Schiller's plans to create a new German theater, based on the model of ancient Greek *Trauerspiele*, in which the people as a whole were united and transformed—inwardly—by aesthetic experience.

Wolf also contributed greatly to German philhellenism by focusing his work—as his teachers did not—on things Greek, and by declaring himself determined to take his degree in the faculty of philosophy, rather than, as was expected, in the faculty of theology. Wolf's teacher Heyne argued that his student was setting out on "the straight road

to starvation,"[16] since most philological graduates were destined for careers in the Church, but Wolf insisted. His deep linguistic knowledge provided a new model of *Wissenschaft*, one that he passed on to many of the leading figures of the period who sought to learn Greek under his direction. It is highly significant that Schiller was a Wolfian and (Winckelmannian) philhellene when he wrote his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, as was Wilhelm von Humboldt when he overhauled the German university and secondary school systems in 1809–10. Humboldt was instrumental in bringing Wolf to the newly created flagship institution, the University of Berlin, and in getting him a position in the Prussian Cultural Ministry.[17]

Wolf and Winckelmann—neither of whom actually set foot in Greece—helped shape a tradition of German aesthetic philhellenism with highly distinctive features. It held that the Greeks were enviable and exemplary above all because they were the first to create truly beautiful things, especially nude sculptures and epic poetry. Greek democracy played a very incidental part in their exemplariness; but it was important to the German philhellenes that the Greeks' best products emerged when they were free from tyranny and from foreign domination. The Greeks were rational, in a special, Platonic way; the natural parts were organically joined together to form wholes. German philhellenism treated Greek religion as subordinate to aesthetics: the presumption was that the Greeks had not really believed in their gods, but simply used them to express their philosophical and aesthetic ideas. What was free about the Greeks was their lack of hidebound rules and rites, their freedom from artistic, social, and religious conventions. Instead their laws and forms were drawn from nature and applied universally (but not mechanically). They were free outwardly, because they made their own laws; but more importantly, they were free inwardly, because those laws were willed individually, just as Luther had explained the coexistence of God's unfettered and omnipotent will with the free will of each individual Christian. Anti-clerical, Protestant, well-educated German thinkers of the later eighteenth century identified closely with what they presumed to be a nation of theater-goers, artists, and philosophers, with a unity constituted by language and culture rather than by shared political institutions or religious rites. What they wanted was what they presumed the Greeks had had: a *Kulturnation*, unencumbered by clerical censors or superstitious peasants, and united in its support and love for art, *Wissenschaft*, and poetry.[18]

This tradition took hold, moreover, in the context of the 1790s, which was, to say the least, an extraordinary decade for educated and politically conscious Germans. As is well known, many German intellectuals greeted the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789; but it did not take long before its rosy bloom faded. Some came to share the criticisms of Revolutionary excess expressed so powerfully by Edmund Burke, whose *Reflections on the Revolution in France* was highly popular in many German states. Appointed to oversee Prussian cultural and ecclesiastical affairs by Frederick the Great's far less enlightened successor Friedrich Wilhelm II, the reactionary minister J. C. Wöllner cheerfully extended Burke's arguments about the threats Reason posed to religion, morality, and the stability of the state.

As Frederick Beiser has explained, in the age of Wöllner, conservatives lined up to denounce Reason and to link it to the guillotine. Fearful of losing all the ground gained during Frederick's enlightened age, German philosophers felt more compelled than ever before to answer the question of the efficacy and limits of Reason. Kant (and Plato) had once thought it enough for citizens to know the good to act morally. But France's dissent into Terror and civil war—and then war with Europe's monarchies—made it clear that Reason alone was neither convincing nor appealing enough to make France's citizens act according to rational principles and moral laws. It seemed that the conservatives were right, and that given freedom, the people had not acted according to the categorical imperative, but had instead pursued their own self-interests, pleasures, and superstitious convictions; the Terror's attempt to impose abstract forms of Reason upon an unprepared and resistant society was itself a new form of tyranny. But the committed *Aufklärer* could not give up on Reason, or on human freedom as society's ultimate goal. How could Reason be internalized, be made to guide action, without force entering the picture? How could individual wills and feelings be trained, so that everyone *freely* embraces the good?[19]

Discouraged by the onset of the Terror and the execution of Louis XVI, the once radical-sounding critic of the Old Regime Friedrich Schiller came up with a compelling answer, one which enrolled the Greeks in the service of a higher, more inward, and more gradual form of social transformation than that being attempted in Revolutionary France. Written in 1793 and published the following year, Schiller's *Letters on Aesthetic Education* argued that actual human beings had to be prepared to understand Reason's laws and to will

their application; the human character had to be shaped (and economic and social dependencies overcome) before a state could really give itself a free constitution. But how were the people to be made whole, to be prepared for freedom, if not by revolution? Schiller's answer, partly quoted by McGrath, made the artist, inspired by the noble and immutable beauty of Greek sculpture, the one who could model the unification of the possible and the necessary, and draw his pupils toward the ideal without tyrannizing them in the process. Political problems were to be solved by aesthetic means, "since it is through Beauty," Schiller claimed, "that we arrive at Freedom."[20]

It is worth, here, quoting a longer passage from the Ninth Letter to demonstrate Schiller's conviction that artistic ideals drawn from the Greek past were a far better means to teach the population truths than were the passing political or even religious "deceptions" or "illusions" of the present:

> No doubt the artist is the child of his time; but woe to him if he is also its disciple or even its favourite. Let some beneficent deity snatch the infant betimes from his mother's breast, let it nourish him with the milk of a better age and suffer him to grow up to full maturity beneath the distant skies of Greece. Then when he has become a man, let him return to his century as an alien figure; but not in order to gladden it by his appearance, rather, terrible like Agamemnon's son, to cleanse it. He will indeed take his subject matter from the present age, but his form he will borrow from a nobler time—nay, from beyond all time, from the absolute, unchangeable unity of his being. Here, from the pure aether of his daemonic nature, flows forth the well-spring of Beauty, untainted by the corruptions of the generations and ages which wallow in the dark eddies below it. A freak of temper can degrade his matter, as it has dignified it; but the chaste form is removed from its vicissitudes. The Roman of the first century had long bowed the knee before his emperors, while the gods' statues still stood erect; the temples remained holy in men's eyes when the gods had long since become objects of ridicule, and the infamous crimes of a Nero and a Commodus were put to shame by the noble style of the building which lent concealment to them. Humanity has lost its dignity, but Art has rescued and preserved it in significant stone; Truth lives on in the midst of deception, and from the copy the original will once again be restored. As noble Art has survived

> noble nature, so too she marches ahead of it, fashioning and awakening by her inspiration. Before Truth sends her triumphant light into the depths of the heart, imagination catches its rays, and the peaks of humanity will be glowing when humid night still lingers in the valleys.
>
> But how does the artist secure himself against the corruptions of his time, which everywhere encircle him? By disclaiming its opinion. Let him look upwards to his own dignity and to Law, not downwards to fortune and to everyday needs. Free alike from the futile activity which would gladly set its mark upon the fleeting movement and from the impatient spirit of extravagance which applies the measure of the Absolute to the sorry productions of Time, let him resign the sphere of the actual to the intellect, whose home it is; but let him strive, through the union of the possible with the necessary, to produce the Ideal. Let him stamp it on illusion and truth, coin it in the play of his imagination and in the gravity of his actions, in every sensuous and spiritual form, and quietly launch it into infinite Time.[21]

Here Schiller also attacked the philosophical revolution that Kant had tried to accomplish in his *Critique of Judgment*, arguing that purely rational means to the harmonizing of nature and the moral sphere would never work. This bridge had to be built in the heart, through aesthetic education, led by artists who playfully (rather than tyrannically) demonstrated the application of the ideal to the real. The artist-educators, however, had to recognize that, as McGrath notes in the introduction's opening pages, beauty too had its laws, and it was only by accepting and adhering to them that society could free itself from what Schiller described as the machine-line, absolutist *Ständestaat*. Elsewhere Schiller used the metaphor of the clockmaker; while he might stop the wheels to repair the clock, the statesman must repair the moral world while society's wheels continue to run.[22] At best this was a liberal plan for reform through education; at worst—and this is how Leonard Krieger read Schiller, Kant, and the whole tradition descendent from them—it was quietist acceptance of the need for reform from above.

Politically speaking, the aestheticized Greeks, as deployed in Schiller's letters, neutralized the potentially revolutionary deployment of the revival of an ancient (sometimes) democratic model. The Greeks' (supposed) emphasis on inward and aesthetic forms of

freedom and their insistence on obedience to rules helped Schiller to articulate the proper means of making the leap from necessity to freedom, as poets and philosophers taught each individual citizen to play with freedom, rather than—as the ungenerous translations of Rousseau's *Social Contract* have it—being "forced to be free."[23] For Schiller and his generation of philhellenes, this kind of education prevented change from occurring too rapidly, endangering society's natural multiplicity of types (and their various privileges) or throwing all into chaos and confusion.

It is noteworthy, too, that pagan Athens provided a *secular* prototype for cultural flowering, something that appealed greatly to a late Enlightenment generation of Protestant thinkers who sought to replace Rome and absolutist France as cultural models and to displace the role of the clergy in the schools. Greece was, for Schiller, Kant, and Goethe, a place where art trumped religion and where the aesthetic, ethical, and physical education of citizens created beings ready for and worthy of being free. It was, then, a proper first stage in a western cultural history that would culminate in the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, and would stand in contrast to older Christian "universal histories," which traced Europe's true cultural origins to the biblical Orient rather than to ancient (pagan) Greece. Although McGrath does not explicitly discuss the ways in which the German philhellenist tradition championed a western cultural history which sidestepped the centrality of the Christian church and the Bible, it is nonetheless important that the tradition he is analyzing is one that substitutes Greece for Rome or Israel as the ideal origin for human cultural history—and one that was repackaged and transmitted to the United States as the model for introductory courses in "Western Civ" after 1945.[24]

Until about 1820, German intellectuals—and especially Protestant German intellectuals—used the Greek model in this way, as a means to make the case for secular cultural reform without raising the red flag of revolution. The underlying argument was that the whole man needed to be reeducated, and then society would change. The French, so it was held, had make the mistake of trying to revolutionize society without the new *Bildung* coming first (here the Germans found Rousseau's *Émile* a much more sympathetic model than his *Social Contract*). But when the modern Greeks did start their own revolution, in the era of high Metternichian repression, their actions immediately drew out the radical political connotations of philhellenism—that

radicalism now taking the form of liberal nationalism rather than the values of 1789, or 1793. Metternich refused to support the Greeks, or to allow volunteers to go to fight with them, though many went along anyway. Classicists and philhellenic publicists were ordered not to speak to the issue for fear of letting the revolutionary genie out of the bottle—and in general, they complied.

As McGrath explains, this is the context in which Goethe had to rethink his philhellenism and his views of Byron, the most prominent of the volunteers. McGrath argues that Goethe ended up with a critique of Benthamite political radicalism and Byronic self-indulgence and advocated instead a slower, more inward process of "liberation" for the Greeks, one that would inevitably involve subordination to a self-imposed authority, presumably a king. The Greeks were not ready for true freedom, he suggested—an attitude which would have a long and repressive legacy among colonial overlords. But Goethe's position seemed ratified when the new president of the Greek republic, Ioannes Kapodistrias, was murdered in 1831, and Greece was compelled to take a monarch. As it happened, the new state's first two choices said no, and the third-place laurels went, as noted above, to Ludwig I's son Otto. Ludwig initially hoped to make the Greek Wars of Independence the first act of a mission of enlightenment and liberation that would free Istanbul from Ottoman rule and reestablish Christianity in the old haunts of the Byzantine Empire.[25] Numerous Greek intellectuals, too, were drawn to this "Megali idea," and were sorely disappointed that the Europeans would not put real muscle behind Ludwig's "big idea." Modern Germans—most infamously Jacob Fallmerayer, who claimed the modern Greeks were less beautiful and intelligent than their classical forebears because the population had suffered racial mixing—were disappointed with modern Greece and modern Greeks, and largely left them to their own devices.[26] A very large number of Grecophiles—including some of the greatest of the classical philologists of the era—never set foot on actual Greek soil. August Boeckh claimed that he knew what Greece had looked like in antiquity, and that was good enough for him.[27]

Despite this modern history of half-hearted support for actual Greek "freedom," in the form of political autonomy, the tradition of German philhellenism did produce cultural efflorescence in various fields, and was firmly institutionalized in museums, art schools, universities, and secondary Gymnasien by the time Gottfried Semper published his *Preliminary Remarks on Polychrome Architecture and Sculpture*

in Antiquity in 1834. As McGrath shows, Semper took aim at a specific aspect of the Winckelmannian tradition, arguing that the Greeks had painted their sculptures and buildings, rather than confining themselves to displaying their marbles in naked, purely white form. Here Semper was registering an early complaint against what would later in the century be called "plaster cast antiquity," a conventional, academic, version of the philhellenic ideal many neo-romantics claimed robbed the Greeks of vibrancy and life. Richard Wagner would complain about another, in his view, bastardized, legacy of the Wolfian tradition: the overly "scientific" drilling of students in the niceties of classical philology, rather than the conveying of inspiring mythological tales.[28] And, of course, Friedrich Nietzsche—whose debts to both of these figures McGrath makes clear—would perform the most memorable, and consequential, renovation of this philhellenic tradition by deepening the Dionysian shadows around the Apollonian light, by rejecting Wolfian (and Kantian) *Wissenschaft* itself as an illusion, and by suggesting that Kant's recipe for aesthetic propaedeutics, "purposiveness without purpose," was nothing but an empty, life-destroying, will to power.

Whatever their other disagreements, from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, these key cultural figures, fearful of merely outward expressions of Reason and of empty forms of liberation, continued to look to the "distant skies of Greece," seeking *aesthetic* answers to what were at base *political* questions, or to put it in Schiller's terms, seeking forms of beauty that would ready each individual to will freedom for himself. As E. M. Butler noted already in the 1930s, there was something about this philhellenic tradition that was peculiarly German;[29] although there were certainly philhellenes in Britain, France, and the newly formed United States—to list but a few places—they were, on the whole, cut from a different cloth, and more likely to emphasize *political* freedom, while the Russian Grecophiles touted the importance of a shared Orthodox Christianity. Thus German philhellenism was critical, in McGrath's view, in making the German idea of freedom "distinctly different from the prevailing conception of freedom in Western Europe," and worthy of treating as a "red thread" that runs through and links the figures traced in his lectures and in this volume.

To raise the issue of distinctiveness means, in the German case, to point at least implicitly to the Third Reich, and at the same time to invoke the dense and often provocative historiography concerning a

German special path or *Sonderweg*. Anglo-Americans' initial efforts to articulate the "specialness" of Germany after Hitler's seizure of power began even before Hitler had been finally defeated. Unlike their German counterparts, historians working in the United States tended to adopt a rather lofty view of things. Understandably consumed by the need to make sense of the apparent regression from civilization to barbarism, they looked for and found the path that led to Hitler in a "German mind" that had been shaped by a long line of thinkers, the official voice, as it were, of the German people as a whole. Whether theologians such as Luther or philosophers such as Fichte or cultural critics such as Julius Langbehn, these avatars of Germany left behind a trail that was easy to follow. Hans Kohn actually called his account of "the education of a nation" *The Mind of Germany*. Four decades later, Wolf Lepenies revived the tradition in a book called *The Seduction of Culture*.[30] Here Lepenies claimed that a peculiarly aberrant spirit had "entered into Germany" at some point in the past, one marked by "the close connection" of "war and culture, education and destruction, politics and poetry, and spirit and violence."[31] The German "national attitude" has taken the form of "regarding culture as a substitute for politics and of vilifying politics," and its consequences could not have been more dire: "the submission of civil society to the state, the surrender of the individual to the community," "the propagation of national values and racial pride rather than the pursuit of universal ideals," "the deliberate rejection of liberal ideas," the "romantic revolt against modernity," the alienation and exile of democrats and liberals, and, inevitably, "the rise of National Socialism and the fall of the Weimar Republic."[32]

McGrath did not live to read Lepenies' book and therefore did not write in dialogue with it, but it is nevertheless worth considering how he would have responded to it. The work he did explicitly respond to was, of course, Leonard Krieger's 1957 study *The German Idea of Freedom*, unquestionably the most erudite and most ambitious of the postwar efforts to make sense of German distinctiveness. Krieger, a former member of the Research and Analysis Branch of the Office of Strategic Services during World War II, synthesized intellectual, political, social, and economic perspectives in order to explain "the history of a political tradition." With its striking formulation of freedom understood as a pendant of state authority, Krieger's work provided the foundation for many further accounts of the failure of liberalism in Germany, in terms of both political theory and political practice.

As McGrath made clear in his introduction, his own thinking began with and departed from Krieger's. But his shift from Krieger's largely political preoccupations (which gave thinkers like Kant a minor role) to his own cultural ones put McGrath, unbeknownst to him, in the company of Lepenies' meditation on this culture that seemed to love culture too much. Like Lepenies, for instance, McGrath devoted a great deal of attention to Thomas Mann and his critique of his fellow Germans. And like Lepenies, he focused on canonical German figures in a broader western cultural tradition. But ultimately, he wrote a very different book.

In McGrath's account, the distinctive qualities of the German tradition "enrich the broader tradition of European freedom" rather than undermine or negate it. Goethe seems right to worry about both the Benthamites' mechanical and Byron's self-indulgent approach to freeing the Greeks. Wagner has an uncannily acute sense of the loveless, alienated character of human relationships in modern bourgeois society, and Nietzsche is the insightful critic of the hubris of western positivist science. McGrath's Thomas Mann commits himself to western-style democracy in the 1920s but with a somber understanding of the shallowness of the Enlightenment's insistent optimism. We are left to believe that for McGrath, as against Krieger, the German idea of freedom, in dialogue with the Greeks, is different from the French and British ideas of freedom, but may also add a vital note of somber pessimism and critical caution. And we should not take for granted, either, spiritual and creative freedom, something upon which intellectuals today continue to depend.

It will be evident to all readers that McGrath's synthesis, while compelling, focuses attention on a few works; in the case of several authors, one work absorbs the entirety of his analysis; in the Nietzsche chapter, for example, Nietzsche's works after *The Birth of Tragedy* are largely ignored. McGrath has clearly chosen his texts to fit his theme—and most of them involve things Greek in some way or another. Few would, I think, question his choices as works that represent central features of the corpus of each of his individual thinkers, nor would there be much argument as to the centrality of these texts to the canon of important works of nineteenth-century Germany. A possible exception here would be McGrath's chapter on the works of the architect Gottfried Semper, though McGrath clearly shows just how important Semper's thinking and building practices were for the mid-century, and for Wagner and Nietzsche later in the

century. Of course, many other figures such as Schopenhauer have been omitted, and McGrath only touches on some figures essential to his analysis—most importantly Kant and Schiller—in his introduction. Moreover, McGrath chose to deal only glancingly with the vast secondary literature on all of these figures, and of course more even has been published since his death. Nevertheless these chapters are organically linked together and form a whole, illustrating—if by pointillist method—the picture McGrath wants to paint of the particularities of German cultural ideals as a whole.

Having spent much of his career in the fin-de-siècle, that transitional period of transformation when political and cultural life seemed to become shriller, more confrontational, more extreme and dogmatic, McGrath, rather surprisingly, focused his last book mainly on writings and projects completed by 1880. Thomas Mann is of course the great exception in this regard. But Mann appears here as a voice ultimately affirming the value of a German tradition of freedom within the broader European one—the affirmation coming after he had experienced its transmutation into a doctrine of absolute submission to an aesthetically hypertrophied authority. Mann stands as the figure who has absorbed and in effect rejected the path that Nietzsche took in his later writings, the one who rejects the racist Nietzsche of the Nietzsche Archive, the self-deified Wagner of Winifried Wagner's Bayreuth, and, tout court, the exclusionary version of Germany's cultural legacy peddled in the *Völkische Beobachter*.[33] One could also say that McGrath's cultural legacy consists in large part of figures who drew considerable inspiration from the revolutionary tradition embodied by the French. Goethe, Semper, and Wagner all thought extensively about revolution as a means of cultural regeneration. Wagner even practiced it, first on the barricades (or rather in the church steeple, as lookout post) and then in the would-be revolutionary site he created in Bayreuth for the regeneration of Germany through music-drama; Winckelmann owed much to Montesquieu, and Nietzsche to Voltaire. Moreover, McGrath, unlike Lepenies, puts his energies into illuminating the nature of artistic and intellectual creation, not speculating on the lessons—political or otherwise—that others might draw from their creations. That task, after all, had been his subject in his first book. *German Freedom and the Greek Ideal* was intended by contrast to understand those who had created a "cultural legacy of artistic and intellectual brilliance," to understand them on their own terms, in their own time, and in the orbit of their own

creative achievement. As he had said earlier in defending his analysis of Freud, historians have a legitimate task in figuring out where ideas come from but "it is not up to [them] to concern themselves with their truth or falsity."[34]

And yet, McGrath makes clear, especially in his Goethe chapter and in the conclusion to the chapter on Thomas Mann, that the tradition of valuing above all aesthetic or as it terms it occasionally "spiritual" freedom is also essentially an elitist tradition. Kant's *Critique of Judgment* assumed that we are all hardwired in the same way and that our aesthetic judgments emerge as if spoken with a universal voice. This set of claims opens the way for certain persons to delegate to themselves the task of training every individual to develop that voice. Because Schiller insisted that individuals had to be trained to make judgments of beauty and that societies had to be led gradually—and by the poets and artists—from the world of necessity to that of freedom, his model of political reform was one in which full citizenship (or liberation) could not be granted to an unprepared population. Schiller perhaps meant this metaphorically, or anticipated that mass enlightenment would occur rather speedily, as the dawn spreads downward from the mountain tops to the valleys in the lovely metaphor he deploys in his Ninth Letter (quoted above). But anyone inhabiting the Prussia or Bavaria of the 1790s would have recognized this plan for national *Bildung* as utopian, given both the high rate of illiteracy and the churches' stranglehold on education at the time; Schiller himself recognized that the poverty of the laboring classes made it impossible for them to actually experience the aesthetic education necessary to prepare them for enlightened freedom, but, as Beiser shows, offered no plans for state intervention to remove this obstacle.[35] Had Schiller asked them, the peasants and itinerant journeymen of his day might have wished to be granted freedoms of movement and employment right away rather than waiting for artists to lead them to paradises of free creativity and spiritual freedom. Though Wolf and Humboldt, as we have seen, would institutionalize Schillerian education (including extensive training in classical languages) in the secondary and higher schools, throughout the nineteenth century and until the 1960s this sort of secularized schooling was only available to the very few—and fewer still would have been able to join the ranks of those artists, poets and professors of philosophy who could truly take advantage of the new artistic and intellectual freedoms. McGrath's concluding sentences show us Thomas

Mann in the Cold War era reminding himself of Schiller's conviction that humankind's majestic achievements have always been the product of the few; the higher forms of "freedom" these thinkers sought were ultimately of a sort that enabled the production of great art (or literature, or music), and viewed as trivial or illusory more prosaic freedoms such as the right to vote or to be treated to a fair trial. What exactly we are to make of this elitism McGrath does not say; but perhaps that is the final lesson this book has to teach us: it is for the reader to weigh in balance the lights and shadows, the creative achievements, and the political evasions, of the German cultural tradition he has so deftly described.

McGrath's *German Freedom* is a departure in topic from his work on Austrian cultural history, but in approach it is very much of a piece with his previous work. Like his earlier volumes, it is what one might now call "old-fashioned" intellectual history, with its emphasis placed firmly on the exploration of a few, key texts. But McGrath's book is richly rewarding precisely for this reason: he is a careful and insightful reader of texts which had a profound influence upon other writers and still resonate in our own culture. McGrath does not simply describe Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* or Wagner's *Ring*, but painstakingly examines particular passages and problems, highlighting their debts to earlier works as well as explorations of new problems. He does not offer expansive contextualization but still uses contemporary events and debates to effect illumination or explanation, for example, in the chapter on Goethe's revisions to Faust 2. This book is an important contribution to intellectual history because it offers something of a rarity in contemporary writing, and that is a synthetic, "big picture," analysis of a major tradition. In that sense, it resembles the work of other great synthetic thinkers such as Cesar Grana (*Modernity and Its Discontents*), H. Stuart Hughes (*Consciousness and Society*), Marshall Berman (*All That Is Solid Melts into Air*), Erich Heller (*The Disinherited Mind*), John Burrow (*The Crisis of Reason*), and M. H. Abrams (*Natural Supernaturalism*). We are fortunate that we now may place *German Freedom and the Greek Ideal* among them.

Celia Applegate
Suzanne Marchand, Editors

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Introduction

"Beauty is the only possible expression of freedom in phenomena."[1] Friedrich Schiller's striking claim, advanced in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, expresses a quintessentially German idea of freedom. Schiller believed that being subjected to the laws of beauty in the aesthetic experience prepared the individual to move beyond the determinism of physical existence to autonomy and freedom. Through his aesthetic temper "the physical man is so far ennobled that the intellectual man now merely requires to be developed from him according to the laws of freedom."[2] Freedom, like beauty, becomes possible through the authority and constraint of law. This association of freedom with authority had deep historical roots in German culture, and it shaped the way the artists and thinkers who came after Schiller approached the issues of freedom and beauty in their work.

In stressing the importance of an aesthetic education, Schiller pointed to a cultural ideal remote from his own time and place, the ideal of ancient Greece. Imagining the fate of an artist who was a child of his time, he writes, "Let some beneficent deity snatch the infant betimes from his mother's breast, let it nourish him with the milk of a better age and suffer him to grow up to full maturity beneath the distant skies of Greece. Then when he has become a man, let him return to his century as an alien figure; but not in order to gladden it by his appearance, rather, terrible like Agamemnon's son, to cleanse it."[3] Schiller's image of an avenging Orestes, exacting retribution for the betrayal of art, invests the artist with a vital role; he must acknowledge his debt to the nurturing ideals of ancient Greece and then implement those ideals to transform the culture of his own time.

Over the following century and a half, in a wide variety of fields, the German conception of freedom expressed by Schiller shaped the outlook of some of the most creative thinkers of the modern age as they sought to understand the nature and origins of beauty.

The poetry of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the architecture and aesthetic theory of Gottfried Semper, the music and essays of Richard Wagner, the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, and the writings of Thomas Mann all devote particular attention to the interrelated themes of freedom and artistic creativity. Each of these thinkers drew on the intellectual tradition associated with the German idea of freedom and adapted it to the changing conditions of his time, and, like Schiller, each also looked to the culture of ancient Greece to find an ideal model of beauty and artistic greatness. What they found to admire in ancient Greek culture underwent a progressive change over time from the noble simplicity described by Winkelmann and praised by Goethe, through the more vivid Greek culture explored by Semper and Wagner, to the Dionysian exuberance that inspired the interest of Nietzsche and Mann. What they understood to be the meaning of freedom also changed, particularly under the pressure of dramatic political events, altering the balance between the worldly and spiritual aspects of freedom within the German tradition. And as each thinker reconceptualized the idea of freedom, the contributions of each to that tradition reshaped the legacy passed on to the next. Over the period from the end of the eighteenth to the early twentieth century the accumulated weight of change gave the German idea of freedom a very different meaning, but all through this time it remained distinctly different from the prevailing conceptions of freedom in Western Europe.

In *The German Idea of Freedom*, Leonard Krieger discusses this contrast as it stood around the time of the French Revolution. Focusing on the rights of the individual, the western European tradition emphasized the basic liberties of freedom of the press and religion, of economic activity, and of participation in the processes of governance. He writes, "When combined, these various kinds of rights became organized into a consistent and total constitutional system which endowed them with a permanent form and guarantee. Freedom in the sense of this system was integrally realized only in those nations of the west which can be loosely denominated as the Atlantic community."[4] The historical development of the German states of central Europe, however, produced a situation "which made the idea of liberty not the polar antithesis but the historical associate of princely authority."[5] There, the triumph of particularism, the victory of the aristocratic princes in their early modern power struggle with the monarchy, provided a very different context for

liberty from that further west where centralizing monarchs won that struggle.

In attempting to translate the meanings and connotations of the difficult term, *Libertaet*, Krieger notes that "In the most literal sense, *Libertaet* referred simply to the rights of the German princes within the Holy Roman Empire." In this sense, the meaning of the term derived from the medieval feudal relationship between lord and vassal, in which the lord granted a fief with certain specified rights or liberties to his vassal in return for service—usually military service. Within the fief the lord's authority was suspended with respect to certain governmental functions, and the vassal took on some aspects of sovereignty, such as the right to coin money or administer justice. Similarly, when the Emperor or the aristocratic princes granted a town charter, it specified that the citizens of the town would enjoy certain liberties or immunities (such as the suspension of traditional fees or obligations). These usages gave the meaning of the term liberty or freedom something of the sense of a realm or space apart from the existing political and social world.

In their long struggle with the German Emperor, the aristocratic princes not only asserted their own freedom from the power of the Emperor, they also put themselves forward as the defenders of their subjects' freedom. Their increasing success in establishing themselves as autonomous territorial sovereigns led to the historical association of freedom with authority. As Krieger writes, "The internal connection, reflected in the notion of *Libertaet*, between the governing rights of the princes and the representative rights of the people was the first link in the development which was to associate freedom with the very authority of the state in Germany."[6] Ultimately the evolution of what Krieger calls "aristocratic freedom" resulted in a full identification of freedom with the state. The aristocratic prince "developed his territory into a sovereign state precisely by elevating all inhabitants to a status of common membership in the community." This produced a belief that somehow freedom inhered in the relationship of the different parts or members of the community to the whole. As Krieger puts it in describing the relationship of the aristocracy and the commoners in the new territorial state, "If the aristocracy supplied the basic principle that liberty is integrally joined to the exercise of public authority" the commoners contributed "the notion that the state is the embodiment of human freedom."[7] At the end of the eighteenth century, when the aristocratic

princes exercised absolute political control over their territories, this meant that the prince himself, by representing the totality of his subjects' sovereign rights, came to be seen as the embodiment of that freedom.

Immanuel Kant, whose philosophy became an important vehicle for the transmission of the German idea of freedom, refers in his essay "What is Enlightenment?" to his own prince, Frederick the Great, as a representative of the people's will who fosters the spread of freedom. He observes that the monarch's "legislative reputation rests upon his uniting the entire people's will in his own," and he goes on to emphasize the beneficial role of the prince's authority in encouraging the spread of freedom. Because Frederick had a powerful army and asked only obedience, he could allow his subjects a greater degree of freedom of thought and expression than an ostensibly free state where the ruler had less authority.[8]

As Carl Friedrich observes, "It is impossible to assess the 'influence' of Kant on succeeding generations precisely because it is so vast."[9] Kant's philosophy, particularly in its focus on freedom and necessity, exercised a shaping influence not just on subsequent philosophical thought, but on all areas of intellectual and cultural activity. In his theory of knowledge, he is credited with having carried out a "Copernican revolution" in our conception of reality, moving discussion of that fundamental philosophical issue to an entirely new level. Kant did this by reconsidering the role of causality in the process of knowing reality, and this reconsideration laid the basis for those other major components of his philosophical system, his moral philosophy and his analysis of judgment, both of which exemplify the German idea of freedom. So his entire philosophical system is of a piece in its importance to the transmission and elaboration of the idea of freedom in German culture. An understanding of its key elements provided the foundation on which subsequent generations of artists and thinkers based their ideas about freedom and necessity.

In taking up the key issue of causality, Kant sought to justify an absolute faith in the ability of science to explore and predict the outcome of cause and effect relationships in nature while also leaving room for a belief that rational beings could exercise true freedom of the will. To explain how freedom of the will could be compatible with the necessity of a natural world unconditionally determined by cause and effect, Kant took apart the unitary conception of reason to

distinguish a number of rational faculties with different functions. Theoretical or scientific reason served the purpose of knowing the world of nature. Practical or moral reason motivated the human will to act in such a way that morality and freedom became possible. The faculty of judgment, which in a certain sense bridged the worlds of moral and scientific reason, came into play in questions of aesthetics or teleology.

What made Kant's treatment of the problem of causality in nature so revolutionary was that he radically redefined what was commonly understood to be reality. Where Copernicus' demonstration that the earth revolved around the sun challenged humanity's assumption that it occupied a central position in the universe, Kant's philosophy established impassable limits to what humanity could ever know about the true nature of things by suggesting that theoretical reason shaped our experience of things in the process of knowing them. Kant distinguished between things in themselves and things as we experience them, arguing that the faculty of theoretical reason, which allowed us to experience them, ordered those experiences according to the categories of time, space, and causality. Since the world of experience, the phenomenal world, would always be so ordered, causality would always hold in the world of experience. Theoretical reason, however, could never know the nature of the thing in itself. This line of thought, therefore, identified the natural world with the realm of possible experience, the world of phenomena. A comment by one of Kant's friends shows how radically this challenged the underlying assumptions of the Enlightenment; Moses Mendelssohn called him "the smasher of everything."[10] He had shattered the belief that reason had no limits and would eventually be able to explain the innermost essence of things.

While Kant's phenomenal world of nature may have seemed an insubstantial thing to people like Moses Mendelssohn, Kant himself believed his analysis of theoretical reason solidified faith in science by showing why cause and effect inevitably determined events in that world. But if causal necessity determined everything that happened in the phenomenal world of nature, how was freedom of the will possible? Kant took up that question in his analysis of pure practical reason, the faculty of reason that motivated the will. The beginning of an answer came out of Kant's analysis of theoretical reason and causality. If theoretical reason imposed causality on the

phenomenal world as part of a process through which the mind constructed experience, then the determinacy of that world did not in any way preclude the possibility of a freedom originating in the unknowable world of things in themselves, the noumenal world. The action manifesting that freedom would necessarily appear in a causal web, but that would say nothing of the true origin of the action. To move beyond this important first step, Kant undertook to show that the concept of free will could be reduced to that of autonomy. The will of a fully autonomous individual would be uninfluenced by any external factors, including inducements that served the particular advantage or appetites of that individual. Under those circumstances an action would not be motivated by anything in the causal world of phenomena, and might, therefore, be free. Conceding the impossibility of proving the existence of freedom—since the instrument of proof, theoretical reason, could say nothing about the noumenal realm where freedom might originate—Kant argued that nonetheless we do have an idea of freedom, and that "every being who cannot act except *under the idea of freedom* is, in practical respects, really free for just that reason."[11] On the basis of this claim, Kant concluded, "Now we see that when we conceive ourselves as free we transfer ourselves into the world of intellect and recognize the autonomy of the will with its consequence, morality."[12] With this economical solution to the problem of showing what made freedom of the will possible, Kant supplied the necessary underpinning for the practical work of defining the rules governing free and moral actions.

According to Kant, the achievement of freedom and morality came through the self-imposition of a universal law, which he called the categorical imperative. Although he presented it in several different forms, Kant maintained that "there is only one categorical imperative, namely this: Act only on a maxim by which you can will that it, at the same time, should become a general law."[13] An individual acting under such a general law would necessarily act out of a concern for the good of all humanity and would, therefore, exclude any consideration of private advantage. In this association of freedom with the authority of law, Kant echoes a central theme of the German idea of freedom, as he also does in the underlying principle of the categorical imperative, with its reconfiguration of the idea that freedom comes from a proper relationship of the parts to the whole. The individual members of the human race (the parts) become free

by acting for the good of all humanity (the whole). In this way, the free autonomous individual becomes a first cause whose motivation comes from the noumenal world of the intellect and whose actions appear in the phenomenal world enmeshed in the causal web inherent in that world.

Having established a fundamental divide between the causally determined phenomenal world of nature known by theoretical reason and the noumenal realm where pure practical reason provided the basis for free and moral action, Kant set out in his *Critique of Judgment* (1790) to show how the mental faculty of judgment bridged these two worlds. He did this at a moment of great historical importance. As Krieger points out, "The French Revolution, which meant to Kant the breaching of the world of experience by a tremendous moral act, coincided with just that point in his philosophical development when he was linking the realm of freedom to the realm of nature by means of a comprehensive and vital synthesis." As the revolution unfolded through the decade of the 1790s, the various minor works Kant wrote continued to show his "intense desire to unite the realms of morals and of social experience in one system."[14] The epoch-making historical event of the French Revolution seemed to show the possibility that human reason could change an existing political order based on compulsion, a political order that formed an integral part of the world of necessity. Many intellectuals greeted the revolution with similar enthusiasm, but few remained loyal to it with the determination Kant exhibited. As Kant said of the revolution, "For such a phenomenon in human history can never be forgotten, because it has revealed a trait and capacity in human nature which no statesman could have gleaned from the previous course of things and which alone unites nature and freedom according to internal principles of law in human history."[15] Through the first half of the nineteenth century as the threat of revolution repeatedly recurred it served to remind artists and intellectuals of the way the revolution of 1789 had at least momentarily tipped the balance in favor of freedom and against necessity.

Kant's *Critique of Judgment* reflects this historical moment in its effort to expand the connections between the worlds of freedom and necessity. Judgment comes into play in situations involving the assessment of the various aspects of a thing to its end or purpose, and Kant examines two broad categories in which the power of

judgment deals with end-related forms. As Carl Friedrich describes them, they are, "the form of the work of art which is called beautiful because all its constituent parts are harmoniously blended into a whole that has unity, and the form of living beings which is called organic because all its constituent parts, too are harmoniously blended into a whole that has unity."[16] Although Kant had already shown one highly restricted link between the noumenal and phenomenal worlds in the form of free moral actions, which originated in the noumenal realm and manifested themselves in the phenomenal world of nature, these two categories involving the faculty of judgment greatly expanded and deepened the points of contact between the two worlds.

Kant does not, in his analysis of judgment, describe the exact forms that freedom would take in the world of nature, but he does suggest a general pattern. Krieger provides a vivid description of the interaction between the two worlds linked by Kant in his *Critique of Judgment*. The phenomenal world, "as viewed through natural laws, was composed of lifeless, interchangeable, physical entities, moving mechanically through time in an irreversible sequence imposed upon it by external compulsion." Within this mechanical world, "the role of freedom was to feed a spark of dynamism into certain of these entities, imparting to them the capacity for self-movement, an element of intentionality, and a vital relationship of parts which made for the irreducible integrity of the whole."[17] The power of judgment, in evaluating the relationship of parts to whole in this organic example, attempts to infer what these acts of freedom reveal about the ultimate end of human nature.

The part of Kant's *Critique of Judgment* dealing with aesthetics proved to be immediately influential. It provided the intellectual foundation for Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*,[18] and Goethe praised it highly as well, reportedly saying that reading Kant was like entering a brightly lit room.[19] As in the organic category, judgment involved the relationship of the parts to the whole; in the case of a work of art it assessed how the constituent elements served to achieve the end of beauty in the work as a whole. Aesthetic judgments involved freedom in a number of ways. For example, while claiming a universal validity, they necessarily issued from individual feelings, which rooted them in the autonomy of the individual, the basis of human freedom. More important still was Kant's assertion that "the beautiful is the symbol of the morally good, and that it

is only in this respect . . . that it gives pleasure with a claim for the agreement of everyone else. By this the mind is made conscious of a certain ennoblement and elevation above the mere sensibility to pleasure received through sense."[20] Since the morally good could only come from the free actions of the autonomous individual, beauty also symbolized freedom, and the ennoblement and elevation, to which Kant refers, lift the aesthetic experience of the individual above the phenomenal, causally determined world of sense impressions. This idea provided the basis for Schiller's claim that beauty is freedom in the world of phenomena.

Various factors in the historical situation of central Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century combined to make the theme of freedom and necessity a subject of enduring interest not just to the thinkers and artists of that time, but also to those of succeeding generations. The long political and cultural tradition of the German idea of freedom provided an appropriate context; Kant's work, which built on that tradition and translated some of its central ideas into a powerful philosophical system, furnished the intellectual material for a multifaceted consideration of the issue; the French Revolution, which seemed to Kant and others to exemplify the possibility that freedom and morality could break through the web of political necessity and change phenomenal reality, impelled a reconsideration of all previous political and cultural assumptions.

In the early 1820s, a new series of revolutionary outbreaks across Europe again threatened the conservative order reestablished by the Holy Alliance, but it suppressed all but one. In Greece alone, under the banner "freedom or death," the revolutionaries eventually succeeded in defeating the Turks and establishing a new and independent government, the first independent Greek state in more than two thousand years. Both a war of independence and a revolution, the Greek cause attracted support across Europe. The political and cultural legacy of ancient Greece, combined with the example of a determined effort to break free of the existing political system, made it a powerful symbol of the hope that freedom might yet prevail over the repressive forces of political necessity. Even Goethe, a strong supporter of the conservative order, reluctantly came to support the Greek cause and used it as a vehicle for exploring the theme of freedom and necessity in his work. Gottfried Semper enthusiastically supported the Greeks in their struggle for freedom, and he went to the newly liberated Greece to find evidence for his aesthetic theories

linking the interplay of freedom and necessity to the cultural greatness of ancient Greece.

By the time Wagner set to work on the project that eventually became the *Ring of the Nibelungs*, it was the hope inspired by the impending European revolutions of 1848–49, rather than the memory of the Greek revolution that impelled him to focus his project on the relationship of freedom to the world of political necessity, but the freedom and artistic greatness of ancient Greece remained as a powerful ideal shaping the direction of his work. The failure of the revolutions produced a significant change in the conception of freedom Wagner expressed in his ongoing work on the *Ring*, shifting its focus from freedom in the world to freedom from the world. This return to the apolitical in the tradition of German freedom established the framework within which both Nietzsche and Mann examined the theme of freedom and necessity. A friend of both Semper and Wagner, Nietzsche drew on the work of each to nourish his own highly original conception of the Dionysian Apollonian interaction underlying the artistic greatness of ancient Greece, and then on this basis he elaborated a philosophy of self-overcoming that gave the German idea of freedom a dynamic new form.

For Thomas Mann, the theme of freedom and necessity figured importantly in the novels, short stories, and essays written over the course of a lifetime, and his treatment of this theme changed dramatically over that period as the Germany of Bismarck became the Germany of Hitler. From the young author of *Buddenbrooks*, whose readings of Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Nietzsche formed the basis for an outlook highly skeptical of Western European ideas of political freedom and of the idea of free will in general, he eventually became an ardent defender of political freedom, as the hope for such freedom dimmed across Europe. For Mann too, the culture of ancient Greece provided an ideal of artistic creativity that figured prominently in his writings, and it was from Nietzsche that he derived his understanding of the dynamic forces at work in that creative process. Mann remained loyal to Nietzsche's philosophy even after he returned to the world of political engagement Nietzsche had scorned, and he also continued to believe that the German tradition of freedom had distinctive qualities that enriched the broader tradition of European freedom he had come to affirm. From Goethe's time to his own, artists and thinkers engaged in the most diverse fields of creative activity had drawn on the German idea of

freedom to build a cultural legacy of artistic and intellectual brilliance. Particularly in the darkest moments of Nazi triumph, Mann could not abandon that legacy, one whose persistence over the course of nearly a century and a half of German history is detailed in the pages that follow.

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Freedom and Authority: Goethe's *Faust* and the Greek War of Independence

Having experienced the upheavals of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe had become a firm opponent of revolution by the time the Greeks began their struggle to throw off Turkish domination in 1821. In that year, when the Greeks joined a wave of rebellions sweeping across southern Europe, Metternich and the Holy Alliance opposed them, and, in general, Goethe sympathized with Metternich's conservative policies. In the case of Greece, however, fear of violent disorder contended with a deep love of classical Greek culture to pull Goethe in different directions. The efforts of the Greeks to reclaim their independence and their ancient cultural tradition appealed to Goethe's imagination, and eventually he espoused their cause and wove it into his greatest work. In 1825, the death of Lord Byron while fighting for the Greeks at Missolonghi inspired Goethe to resume work on *Faust Part Two*, which he had begun but then put aside in fragmentary form many years before. This new impetus eventually brought the work to completion, and it also produced significant changes in the original conception. According to Eckermann, Goethe observed that "Earlier I had in mind a quite different conclusion; I had conceptualized it in various ways and once quite well . . . Then the times brought me this with Lord Byron and Missolonghi, and I gladly let all the rest go."[1] These events strongly influenced the writing of *Faust Part Two*, particularly the "Helena" section in which Faust returns to ancient Greece, marries Helen of Troy and becomes the father of Euphorion.

That Goethe based his description of Euphorion on elements of Byron's personality has long been recognized, but its significance has not been fully appreciated. Goethe's decision to weave allusions to

this dynamic contemporary figure into his continuation of the Faust story involved much more than an expression of admiration for the recently deceased poet; Byron served as a focal point for Goethe's broader interest in the issues underlying the Greek struggle. His poetic allusions to this struggle allowed him to take a position on a matter of great political importance to his time, a position that advanced his own peculiarly German idea of freedom in opposition to the more radical views put forth by such thinkers as Jeremy Bentham. The Greek War of Independence, which to Goethe illustrated the correctness of his conservative conception of freedom, gave him the key to completing his poem in a way that expressed this view, and the great popularity of Goethe's *Faust* over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries insured that this idea of freedom would gain wide dissemination, in the cultural life of central Europe.

I

Wilhelm Mommsen has aptly described Goethe's political views during his later years as those of an enlightened conservative.[2] Although Goethe could say of the Holy Alliance that "never had anything greater and more beneficial for mankind been created,"[3] he was far from being a doctrinaire reactionary. Of those holding such views he observed, "I completely agree with them in upholding the existing order and forcing revolutionaries to comply, but not with the means employed to that end. Namely, they call on stupidity and darkness for help; I call on understanding and light."[4] Yet Goethe supported the 1823 suppression of the republican revolution in Spain. He viewed the French intervention as a success not only because it defeated the Spanish "who were commanded by many" but also because it solidified the control of the Bourbons over their own military forces, thereby showing "what sort of difference there was in obeying one or many."[5] Goethe firmly believed in the traditional command structure.

With respect to the Greek revolution, however, Goethe's attitude gradually moved from skepticism to sympathy. Mommsen oversimplifies and misunderstands Goethe's views regarding the "struggle for freedom of the Greeks" in saying that he "was in no way friendly toward it and calls Philhellenism a 'disguise for another political party.'"[6] Nor is Mommsen correct in arguing that the sinking of the Turkish fleet at Navarino, the key event in the eventual Greek victory, was "regretted as much by Goethe as by Metternich."[7] In fact, Goethe

had by then become a friend of the Greek cause, even though he remained ambivalent about its politics.

Goethe's early comments on the Greek War of Independence show that his initial opposition grew out of a geopolitical concern that a Greek victory might ultimately increase the power of Russia. According to Friedrich von Müller, a sharp disagreement about "the events in Greece" emerged in his May 22, 1822, conversation with Goethe. In contrast to Müller's sympathetic attitude, Goethe believed that "the war would only contribute to the destruction of individual Christians in Turkey, and that, without Constantinople being destroyed, it could not be given over to any of the great powers without the danger of thereby establishing their dominance of the world. But if one wished to establish a less powerful state or a republic, then the great powers would continually be working to increase their influence there."[8] This hostile view of the Greek rebellion soon gave way to a deepening interest fed by Lord Byron's involvement in the Greek cause. Eckermann reports spending the afternoon of October 19, 1823, with Goethe, during which time "he looked now and again at the newspapers and reported some passages to us, particularly regarding the progress of the Greeks. It was then brought up that I should learn English, which Goethe urgently advised, particularly because of Lord Byron whose personality was of such eminence."[9] The religious dimension of the struggle also fostered Goethe's growing but still ambivalent sympathy for the Greeks. Müller reports an October 11, 1824, conversation in which Goethe said that "he regards the current fighting in Greece as an analogue and surrogate for the crusades—like these it is also, on the whole, highly beneficial to the weakening of the power of the Ottomans."[10] In this view, Goethe departed from the position of the Holy Alliance which put geopolitical concerns above the defense of Christianity in Greece.

By the middle of the next year (1825), Müller noted a further shift in Goethe's outlook—observing that he had "much greater sympathy for the Greeks than before,"[11] and by then, Goethe had resumed work on the new conception of *Faust Two* inspired by Byron's death in the Greek conflict. Goethe learned of Byron's death at Missolonghi (April 19, 1824) in May 1824, and in the following months, he expressed his admiration by writing an essay on Byron. As Otto Pniower observes of his diary notes and conversations, "In short, the whole year shows him filled with interest for this poet of genius."[12] Early

in 1825, Goethe resumed work on *Faust Two* after an interruption of almost 25 years, and over the next year and a half, he completed the "Helena" section.

Goethe's diaries show that he took up the writing of *Faust* on February 26, and a conversation with Eckermann two days earlier shows the importance of Byron to the final development of the "Helena"—the birth and early death of Euphorion. On this occasion Goethe said of Byron, "His disposition always to strive for the unbounded . . . nonetheless stands in a good relationship to the restriction which he imposed on himself through observation of the three unities. If he had only known how to limit himself similarly in the moral sphere!" Goethe believed this inability "was his ruin, and it can very probably be said that he was destroyed by his lack of restraint . . . He always lived passionately for the moment and neither knew nor considered what he did."[13] Goethe saw a fundamental contrast between Byron's passionate belief in freedom as an ideal and the lack of freedom in his personal activities. In *Faust Two*, Euphorion exhibits the same paradoxical loss of freedom in the unbounded striving for freedom. Understanding this apparent paradox illuminates a key concept underlying Goethe's political outlook during his final years.

After resuming work on *Faust Two* in late February 1825, Goethe worked intensely on it until early April, and in addition to completing the first third of the "Helena," he also worked on the conclusion of the drama, writing parts of the "Burial," "Midnight," and "Great Forecourt of the Palace" scenes of Act V. In April, he broke off his writing for about a year, and then from the following April through June 1826, resumed work and finished the "Helena."[14] Even before the beginning of the year-long interruption, Goethe started to do extensive reading about Greece, and from late May through August 1825, he immersed himself as fully as possible in the contemporary accounts of the Greek revolution as well as in detailed physical descriptions of Greece. As Hans Gräf observes, during these weeks various comments in his diaries "show Goethe's lively interest in the Greek struggle for freedom (particularly Lord Byron's fate), and connected with it his close study of the topography of Greece . . . which prepared and enriched the later continuation of the Helen Act."[15] Goethe seems to have been determined to enrich his story of Faust's journey to Greece with as much historical meaning and geographical detail as possible.

II

Among the many works on Greece, which Goethe read at this time, some of the more important were William Gell's *Narrative of a Journey in the Morea*,[16] Edward Blaquière's *Die Griechische Revolution*,[17] Colonel Leicester Stanhope's *Greece in 1823 and 1824*,[18] and William Parry's *The Last Days of Lord Byron*.[19] These works represented the widest range of opinions about the Greek cause from Gell's pro-Turkish point of view to the enthusiastically pro-Greek accounts of Parry, Blaquière, and Stanhope. All were written by people very much engaged in recent events; Blaquière had close ties to the London Greek Committee, the Benthamite organization which coordinated the lion's share of European assistance to the Greeks; Stanhope was the Committee's primary agent in Greece. Even among those authors who favored the Greek side, however, there were important disagreements about the right way to help restore Greek freedom.

For Bentham and his enthusiastic followers among the London Greek Committee, freedom was, as much as anything else, a political slogan which could be used as a weapon against the conservative system established by the Holy Alliance. As he set out on his first trip to Greece in 1823, Leicester Stanhope had occasion to explain the aims of the Committee to various sympathetic groups and individuals he contacted along the way, and his accounts of these meetings reveal the ideological character of his mission. When he met with the Zurich Greek Committee, he told them that the London group included "some of the most . . . virtuous men in England. I mentioned the names of Bentham, Erskine, Mackintosh, Hume, Hobhouse, and the Russells. I said that the grand object of the Committee was to give freedom and knowledge to Greece." Stanhope went on to say that "To communicate knowledge to the Greeks was an object the Committee had near at heart. From this source spring order, morality, freedom, and power. The venerable Bentham . . . had employed his days and his nights in contemplating and writing on the constitution of Greece, and in framing for her a body of rational laws, the most useful of human offerings."[20] Stanhope next traveled to Bern where he met with Count Capo d'Istria, who later became the leader of the new Greek state, and in this conversation he discussed the complex international context of the struggle: "The Count thought our end should be to enlighten Greece and to act upon utilitarian principles. Yes, said I, Count, but do you think that the *Sainte Alliance* will allow

Greece to establish a virtuous republic. His Excellency…then said that it was not in the nature of things that monarchs should encourage republics."[21] The Benthamite program for bringing freedom to the Greeks was revolutionary above all in its insistence that the liberated Greeks should have a republic rather than a monarchy, and at a time when Switzerland was the only republic in Europe this goal represented a profound threat to the established order.

Bentham himself forcefully expressed this view in one of his letters to the Greeks. On November 24, 1823, he wrote, "Grecians!—Some there are among you who say,—Give yourselves to a king! Give yourselves to a king? Know that, if you do so, you give yourselves to an enemy." Advising them to look to the "Anglo-American republic" for their model, he declared: "So sure as you have a king, so sure has the Holy Alliance another member. And what is the Holy Alliance, but an alliance of all kings, against all those who are not kings." Faced with the strength of this international conservative system Bentham gravitated toward the goal of international revolution: "When there was no Holy Alliance, in each State, oppression, though under a monarchy, might, for a time, be more or less mitigated by a revolution in that State. It was so in England in 1688. But now, under the Holy Alliance, there can be no mitigation in revolution in any one State, without a revolution in every other."[22] During the early 1820s, when liberal revolutionary movements developed in Italy, Spain, Portugal, and South America, as well as Greece, Bentham established contact with all these movements and attempted to persuade them to adopt a standardized legal code based on his own political and philosophical principles.[23] So under Bentham's influence the London Greek Committee had actually assumed the leadership of an international revolutionary movement.

Stanhope, in his narrative, had also criticized Byron's intervention into the conflict. This provoked the ire of William Parry, who had developed a particularly close relationship to the poet during the fighting and who disapproved of the Committee's overly theoretical approach to helping the Greeks. Instead of concentrating first on providing the aid necessary for winning a military victory over the Turks, the Committee seemed more intent on implementing Bentham's political and educational schemes. Parry writes, "Here too is the chief agent of the Committee, Colonel Stanhope, organizing the whole country.…from the general government to the schools for children. He has a plan for organizing the military force, for establishing posts,

for regulating the administration of justice, for making Mr. Bentham the apostle of the Greeks, and for whipping little boys, in the newest and most approved mode."[24] Parry argued that Stanhope wanted to "import a large supply of Mr. Bentham's books and scholars" to make up for the lack of practical statesmen among the Greeks, and this claim involved no exaggeration or satire. In his own book Stanhope includes the texts of various letters to Sir John Bowring, the secretary to the London Greek Committee, and in one of these, after noting the lack of Greek statesmen, he writes, "I mention this because I wish you to send out here a few men of political acquirements to write for the public journals."[25] Stanhope went on to mention that he was sending a recent issue of "our Chronicle," the newspaper on which he placed much hope. His policy was to "contend for the absolute liberty of the press and for publicity in every shape . . . I do not like to hazard and gamble when the fundamental happiness of a nation is at stake. The last article in the Chronicle is on Mr. Bentham. Its object is to dispose the people to read and contemplate his works. Conviction follows."[26] This blind faith in Benthamite philosophy greatly irritated Parry, and he frequently used it as a source of ridicule in his account of the Greek struggle.

One of Parry's chief points of dissatisfaction with the Benthamites involved the role of the press. At the time, Greece had no newspapers, and to insure that the emerging nation would enjoy that freedom of the press that Bentham and his followers regarded as essential to its happiness, the Committee gave the highest priority to transporting printing presses to Greece so that a press could be established. As Parry wryly observed, "I am a plain man, and cannot comprehend the use of printing presses to a people who do not read. Here, the committee have sent supplies of maps, I suppose, that I may teach the young mountaineers geography."[27] After criticizing Stanhope's choice of a German who knew neither Greek nor English to put out the paper, Parry moved on to more fundamental problems. "The Greeks have no money, and will not read newspapers for ages to come. There is no communication with different parts of the country; there is no means of receiving any news; and no means of sending it, when got." To Parry this enterprise epitomized the triumph of theory over practicality: "Stanhope begins at the wrong end, and from observing that in our wealthy and civilized country, rapid communication is one means of improvement, he wants to establish posts—mail carts I believe is his object, among a people who have no food."[28] Byron

also saw Stanhope's project as a source of trouble. Parry reports that when Stanhope established a newspaper at Missolonghi, "Lord Byron said, had his will been uncontrolled, it should not have been done." As a committed radical, Byron certainly believed in a free and active press, but as he noted, "The press, in Greece must be in the hands of foreign visionaries and enthusiasts. Practical men had other occupations; and it was therefore placing the power of working mischief in the hands of adventurers." Byron saw the Benthamite project as an effort to create "a single journal, established by foreign assistance, and destined only to promote the views of the theorists who established it."[29]

Another source of conflict with the London Greek Committee involved Byron's apparently disrespectful attitude toward Jeremy Bentham. In his book, Stanhope reported directly on Byron's hostility: "His Lordship then began, according to custom, to attack Mr. Bentham. I said . . . his Lordship never reasoned on any of Mr. B.'s writings but merely made sport of them. I would, therefore, ask him what it was that he objected to. Lord Byron mentioned his Panopticon as visionary."[30] Parry certainly supports Stanhope's charge of disrespect. When Byron asked Parry if he knew Mr. Bentham, he was told the story of their recent meeting. Bentham had invited Parry to breakfast but had failed to tell him that he did not eat breakfast until three in the afternoon (being busy with other things before then). The purpose of the meeting was to allow Parry to show Bentham the stores and materials that were about to be shipped to Greece. When they did meet they, and one of Bentham's assistants, set out on foot across London toward the place where the materials were stored. When they reached St. James Park, Parry was amazed that Bentham "let go my arm, and set off trotting like a Highland messenger . . . and the people one and all, seemed to stare at the old man; but heedless of all this he trotted on, his white locks floating in the wind, as if he were not seen by a single human being."[31] Asking the assistant if Mr. Bentham were flighty, Parry was told that he did it for his health. When the assistant ran after him, Parry was forced to follow. He writes, "I was heartily ashamed of participating in this scene, and supposed that everybody would take me for a mad doctor, the young man for my assistant, and Mr. Bentham for my patient, just broke adrift from his keepers."[32] After Bentham interrupted his run to admire a portrait of himself in a bookstore, Parry made his escape. He reports that "this little history gave Lord Byron a great

deal of pleasure; he very often laughed as I told it; he laughed much at its conclusion and he frequently bade me repeat what he called Jerry Bentham's Cruise."[33] Parry found it particularly offensive that the Benthamites would attack Byron after he had given his life in the Greek cause: "Lord Byron laughed at their intemperate zeal, and the ridiculous appearance of their apostle, but he died in defense of those principles about which they have the great merit of incessantly talking."[34] The desire to rebut what he saw as Benthamite attacks on Byron was the main purpose of Parry's book.[35]

The dispute between Byron and the Benthamites involved many different problems, but in essence it was the political shape of the emerging Greek nation and the basic meaning of freedom that were most at issue. The preface of Stanhope's book put forward the basic elements of the Benthamite program for Greece. It began by drawing a contrast between the enslavement of modern Greeks and the condition of their ancestors who "had been free . . . [A]t a time when all the other inhabitants of the globe were in a state of slavery, Greece alone stood pre-eminent in the enjoyment of those republican institutions, which have continued to excite a higher degree of admiration, in proportion as the mind of man has become more enlightened."[36] The Benthamites hoped that the new Greek nation would also enjoy the benefits of these republican institutions, and the preface warned that the Holy Alliance might try to impose a new tyranny on the Greeks.[37] Praising the work of the London Greek Committee on behalf of freedom, the preface held up England as the model for Greece: "The wide range and bold tone of political discussion, which have long prevailed in England, are universally acknowledged as the primary cause of the blessings which she possesses as one of the freest Nations of the Earth, and her sons, proud of the liberty which they enjoy . . . have been constantly active in promoting the extension of its sway even to the remotest corners of the globe." Suffused with faith in the power of rational exchange, they saw an ideal opportunity to re-implant liberty in Greek soil. "Regenerated Greece presented to their view an ample and fertile field for the cultivation of its advantages, and the establishment of free presses and free discussion was looked forward to as the most effectual means of securing her national independence as well as the personal freedom and security of her children."[38] It was this passionate faith in reason that led the Committee to rush printing presses to Greece when the lack of arms and supplies threatened to extinguish the hopes of the Greeks at any minute.

To Parry, these plans had an unreal quality. John Stuart Mill, who admired Bentham, also criticized his inability to see beyond an English point of view,[39] and Parry saw his blueprint for Greece in a similar light. Emphasizing the ill effects of the English involvement in Greece, he wrote, "we introduced plans for codes of laws, and other measures which had for their object to Anglify Greece . . . and we, I believe, as many intelligent Greeks believe, have postponed, by our interference, the hour of their final liberation."[40] In contrast to the visionary plans of the Benthamites, Parry saw Byron's approach to helping the Greeks as eminently practical: "It is so much opposed to what might be expected from the *poet* of Greece, so completely free from all romance and delusion, that it was plainly the dictate of close observation and mature reason."[41] Parry characterized Byron as one of England's "most ardent champions of rational freedom,"[42] but Byron realized that for meaningful freedom to be achieved, it was necessary to do more than simply escape the dominance of the Turks. As he declared, "The insurrection was literally a slave breaking his chains on the head of his oppressor; but in escaping from bondage, the Greeks acted without a plan. There was no system of insurrection organized, and the people . . . were easily stirred up to animosity against each other, and they fell again under domination of some ambitious chiefs."[43] In Byron's view, what the Greeks most needed was "the energy and the unity derived from an organized system of government, taming some of the passions and directing others to the public good."[44] Where Stanhope's great fear was that Greek freedom might be extinguished by a tyrannical executive overpowering a weak legislature,[45] Byron emphasized the danger that freedom without plan could lead to disintegration. Freedom required governmental authority to tame the passions and insure national unity.

In contrast to the Benthamites, Byron had little faith that the English model was the right one for the Greeks. He warned that "they cannot be a book-learned people for ages . . . and therefore I would not recommend them to follow implicitly any system of government now established in the world or to square their institutions by the theoretical forms of any constitution."[46] After declaring his own devotion to the English constitution, he went on to say that even so, "I would not recommend that constitution to another country. It is the duty of every honourable man to assist every nation and every individual . . . in obtaining rational freedom, but before we can do this we must know in what freedom consists."[47] Byron favored a policy

of allowing the Greeks to choose the form of government best fitted to their needs, and on the basis of his own experience with "the divisions among her different tribes, the want of unity in their views, the discord of her chieftains,"[48] he felt that the United States might provide a better model than England. "From what I have already said of the different interests and divisions which prevail in Greece, it is to me plain that no other government will suit it so well as a federation. I will not say a federation of republics; but a federation of states; each of these states having that particular form of government most suitable to the present situation and wishes of its people."[49] Where the Benthamites worked for the permanent establishment of a Greek republic, Byron believed that the form of government should be decided by the Greeks on the basis of their particular needs.

Beginning in the spring of 1825, Goethe steeped himself in the literature about the struggle for independence, first checking out from the Weimar library Gell's book, *Narratives of a Journey in the Morea*, a book rich in physical description of a journey made years before the outbreak of the Greek Revolution. In late May, library records show that he checked out the books by Blaquière and Stanhope,[50] and his diaries and conversations over the following weeks contain repeated references to various books on Greece, particularly those of Stanhope and Parry, which apparently was not obtained from the Weimar library. Goethe's comments on Parry's *Last Days of Lord Byron* leave no doubt that he favored Parry's point of view. He mentions Parry's book a number of times beginning on June 1 when a diary entry indicates that he spent time in the morning and afternoon reading it.[51] Müller reports that on that date Goethe commented on "Captain Parry's work *The Last Days of Byron*, which was the most interesting of everything that had appeared."[52] On the following day, Goethe's diaries indicate that he was reading the second half of Parry's book,[53] and subsequent comments in his letters and conversations confirm his enthusiasm for it. On June 6, he wrote to Karl Zelter saying, "If you encounter William Parry's *The Last Days of Lord Byron* in translation, quickly seize it; one is not easily raised to so high and clear a standpoint. Everything previously said about him sinks and disappears like fog in a valley."[54]

Goethe explained his admiration for Parry's book in a June 11 conversation with Eckermann, who reported that "he thoroughly praised it and observed that in this presentation Lord Byron appeared much more perfect and much clearer about himself and his plans than in anything previously written about him." Goethe concluded that

Parry "must also be a very significant, indeed a noble person in order to be able to understand his friend so accurately and present him so perfectly." Goethe summarized a favorite passage, which he felt was worthy of a Plutarch, a passage explaining the heavy criticism directed at Byron by the English: "The noble Lord, says Parry, lacked all those virtues which adorn the middle class and which he was hindered from making his own by birth, education and life style." In contrast, his critics, who were almost all from the middle class, "naturally deplore the lack in him of just those things which they have cause to prize in themselves. The good gentlemen fail to consider that his high position gave him merits of which they can have no conception."[55] Despite his radical political views, Byron nonetheless defended the "ancient and honorable aristocracy"[56] of England, and Goethe found Parry's sensitivity to the aristocratic element in Byron's nature to be both insightful and rare.

Goethe seems to have appreciated not only Parry's understanding of Byron's personality but also his anti-utilitarian view of the Greek cause generally. Since Goethe had opposed freedom of the press in the post-Napoleonic period, it seems likely that one source of his delight in Parry's book involved Byron's dispute with the Benthamites on this point. The records of his conversations show that he repeatedly referred to Bentham as a fool;[57] Friedrich Soret's report of a May 12, 1830, conversation is typical: "Goethe was not edified by the enthusiasm . . . shown for the writings of Bentham whom he always holds for a fool—read by fools."[58] In contrast to the liberal faith in freedom and the republican individualism of the Benthamites, the more measured conception of freedom and the sensitivity to the importance of class differences made the views of Byron and Parry much more congenial to Goethe's hierarchical conception of society and reality. His sympathy for Parry's account of the conflict helps resolve the apparent contradiction suggested by his later statement that "he was no philhellene."[59] Here he was not rejecting the general meaning of the term, but distancing himself from utilitarian philosophy—and the Benthamites all-too-radical and abstract conception of Greek freedom.

The different programs for Greek independence entertained by Byron and the Benthamites reflected fundamentally different political assumptions and worldviews, and there can be no doubt about where Goethe's sympathies lay. The battle cry of the Greeks was "freedom or death," but Goethe held a cynical view of this love of freedom. Years earlier (November 20, 1813), he had observed, "The Greeks were

indeed friends of freedom, but each only of his own; therefore in every Greek there was a tyrant which only needed an opportunity to develop."[60] The events of the Greek War of Independence seemed to confirm the survival of this traditional Greek trait. Goethe believed in a very different kind of freedom which he explained to Eckermann in a conversation of January 18, 1827, after he had finished the Helena section of Faust. The topic emerged from a discussion of Schiller's idealism which moved Goethe to compare Schiller with Lord Byron. He speculated about what a meeting between the two would have been like and what Schiller "would have said to so similar a spirit." Byron was noted as a poet of freedom just as was Schiller, and Goethe traced the evolution which the "idea of freedom" underwent over the course of Schiller's life. "In his youth it was physical freedom which concerned him and which passed over into his poetry; in later life it was ideal freedom."[61] Goethe even suggested "that this idea killed him," because it led him to make demands on himself which he wasn't strong enough to sustain.[62]

The idea of freedom advanced by Goethe had a distinctly conservative cast. As he observed, "There is a wonderful thing about freedom; everyone easily has enough if he only knows how to be satisfied and how to find himself."[63] Leonard Krieger, who has explored the origins of the German idea of freedom which influenced Goethe's outlook, points out the connection between this conception of freedom and the immunities, liberties, and rights enjoyed by German aristocrats under feudal law and custom. This tradition was still alive in the Germany of Goethe's youth, and Krieger discusses the way it was utilized by Frederick the Great. In October 1784, when he launched his plan for a League of German Princes, the project "embodied the identification of sovereign interests with aristocratic freedom. He called for a revival of the anti-Imperialist tradition, appealing to the Golden Bull for authority . . . He summarized the particularistic tradition as 'the rights and immunities of the German princes.'"[64] As Krieger observes, even though this League of Princes had an openly reactionary quality, it "was a vital expression of the German nation for the sixteen princes who adhered to it and for the whole section of the politically interested German public to which Goethe later gave voice in his memoirs."[65] The influence of this tradition, which tied freedom to the observation of customary obligations within a hierarchical social order, can be seen in Goethe's January 1827 discussion of freedom, as recorded by Eckermann. He observed that "we are all free only under

certain circumstances which we must fulfill. The burgher is as free as the noble so long as he holds himself within the bounds appointed to him by God through the class [*Stand*] into which he was born. The noble is as free as the prince; for if he only observes a small ceremonial at court he can feel himself his equal."[66] Goethe went on to extend this idea to a general cultural principle of great importance in his own work and in that of such later thinkers as Nietzsche and Freud. He says that "we are not made free by the desire to acknowledge nothing as being above us, but rather by honoring something that is above us. For when we honor it we raise ourselves up to it and manifest through our recognition that we ourselves bear the higher within us and are worthy of being equal to it."[67] This idea, which anticipates Nietzsche's doctrine of self-overcoming and Freud's theory of the ego-ideal, plays a vital role in the final version of *Faust Two*, a work that insured that this concept of freedom would achieve broad dissemination.

III

The contrasting viewpoints of the various philhellenes whose books Goethe read provided him the material he needed to use the model of Byron's experience in Greece to express in the revised version of *Faust Two* a worldview and a conception of freedom fundamentally opposed to that of the English prophet of utility. The second act of *Faust Two* introduces the interrelated issues of freedom and authority in the Laboratory scene, when Homunculus broaches the idea of Faust going back in time to ancient Greece, in a conversation with Mephistopheles. Reading the dream thoughts of the unconscious Faust, Homunculus bids Mephisto to take him to the land of his dreams—to the plains of Thessaly near Pharsalus. Pharsalus had witnessed a battle of great importance in the history of political freedom, the battle of June 6, 48 BC between Caesar and Pompey, sometimes seen as marking the end of the ancient tradition of freedom (with the defeat of the forces backing the Roman Senate). Mephisto at once recognizes the political significance of the destination, but he rejects this "republican" interpretation of the battle for a more cynical view.[68]

> No more! That privilege I gladly waive,
> Of hearing about tyrant versus slave . . . /
> They fight, they say, dear freedom's cause to save; /
> But seen more clearly, slave is fighting slave.

The subsequent scene returns to this theme when the travelers, Homunculus, Mephisto, and Faust, actually arrive on the fields of Pharsalus. Before they arrive, Erichto, a local witch, ponders the political significance of the battle scene:[69]

> The theme returns, how often now! And will return
> For evermore repeated . . . None will empire yield
> To other; none to him who won it with strong arm
> And strongly rules. For every man who has not wit
> To rule his inner self will be most apt to rule His neighbor's
> will, according to his own proud whim
> . . . Yet here a great example in the fight was proved,
> How force against a force more puissant makes a stand
> How freedom's fair and thousand-flowered wreath is rent
> And the stiff laurel coiled to bind the victor's brow.

With these passages, Goethe emphasizes the theme of freedom at the outset of the Greek journey in which Faust will seek and find Helen of Troy. When Faust eventually takes on the role of sovereign ruler in this quest, the relevance of Erichto's words to his situation becomes clear, particularly since he has always found it so difficult to learn how "to rule his inner self."

The meeting between Faust and Helen occurs in Act III, the part of the work Goethe referred to as "the Helena" which he published separately in 1827. Of this act's three scenes, the first depicts the return of Helen after the fall of Troy, the second celebrates the union of Faust and Helen, and the third describes the birth and death of their son Euphorion. In terms of the issues of freedom and authority, the act moves from the presentation of Helen as the representative of authority under challenge, to the fruitful synthesis of freedom and authority symbolized by the marriage of Faust and Helen, to the loss of balance and restraint expressed by the wild freedom of Euphorion. In the first scene, before the palace of Menelaus at Sparta, Helen approaches her earlier home in a state of considerable uncertainty, but having been sent ahead by Menelaus she cites his words as the warrant for her action in taking control of the household:[70]

> Seeking that high and princely mansion, enter in
> And summon all my maids whom I departing left,

> Together with my old sagacious stewardess, . . .
> Then all things will you find preserved in order; for
> This is a prince's privilege, that when he comes
> Again to his home he finds, in trusty keeping, all
> Possessions ranged in his house, as when he went away;
> For in the slave there lives no power to bring in change.

The passage contrasts the authority to take control with the slave's lack of freedom to introduce change. But the "sagacious stewardess," who is actually Mephisto in disguise, at first challenges Helen when she attempts to assert her authority. As Helen reports to the chorus of captive Trojan women who accompany her, "With the voice of firm command I bade her to her work,"[71] but instead of obeying, Mephisto-Phorkyas bars Helen's way and forces her to retreat. When Phorkyas proceeds to criticize the women of the chorus, Helen once again attempts to assert her authority:[72]

> Who chides the waiting maids before their lady's face
> Lays an audacious hand upon her household right;
> For hers alone it is to give the praise deserved . . .

Phorkyas persists in the criticism, and when a quarrel with the women develops, Helen intervenes to restore order:[73]

> With naught of wrath, nay sorrowful I intervene,
> Forbidding to and fro of quarrelling hubbub here,
> For no harm greater can assail the sovereign's state
> Than trusted servants' strife, in secret pledge of feud.

Further sparring with Phorkyas so disturbs Helen that she faints, but she soon recovers, declaring, "Still it befits a Queen, as it does all mankind/ to be self controlled."[74] With this, Phorkyas accepts her authority: "Now you rise up in your greatness, in your beauty stand you there,/ With commanding eyes most regal: what your will is tell us now."[75] The scene strongly emphasizes the idea expressed by Erichto in Act II that true authority begins with self-control.

In the following scene, Goethe uses the meeting of Helen and Faust to establish the relationship between this sort of legitimate authority and true freedom. The meeting occurs after Phorkyas, playing on

Helen's fears of Menelaus, persuades her to seek the protection of a powerful warlord who has settled nearby, and then, with magically unnatural speed, conducts her and her retinue to the medieval fortress of this lord, who is actually Faust. Faust appears dressed in the court costume of a medieval knight, and the language of this scene reflects the elaborate conventions associated with the tradition of courtly love. Faust approaches Helen with a man in chains at his side. This man, the castle's watchman, has been deprived of his freedom as punishment for failing to see the approach of Helen—thereby preventing her from being appropriately welcomed. Faust demands that Helen decide whether he will be put to death or shown mercy for this offense. As a responsible judge she first gives the accused a chance to plead his case, and when he offers a plausible explanation she renders her judgment: "Remove this innocent man and set him free."[76] In this first encounter between Helen and Faust, Helen's just use of authority prepares the way for the granting of freedom.

When Helen passes this test of her judgment, Faust immediately acknowledges her as his liege lady. Using the appropriate medieval language he declares: "[A]t your feet allow me, freely and truly [*frei und treu*] to acknowledge you as mistress [*Herrin*]" (9270–71). The words not only recall the feudal origins of the German idea of freedom, they also echo those remarks of Goethe to Eckermann where the poet ties freedom to the acknowledgement of something superior to which one aspires. Helen represents the inspiring ideal or form for Faust's restless energy, and by acknowledging her authority he gains freedom and mastery over himself. On a psychological level Faust's allegiance to Helen symbolizes the taming of wild emotion through the ancient ideals of balance, form, and order. Lynceus, the castle watchman, reinforces this idea when he describes the activities of the warriors who are Faust's followers:[77]

> We wandered from the Rising Sun,
> And soon the West was over-run . . .

We forged [*drängten*] along, we stormed [*stürmten*] along

> In every place victorious, strong;
> And where I lorded it today
> The morrow's thief would rob and prey.

Like their leader they are full of energy and drive which often prove destructive without the proper restraining influence.

When Faust and his followers recognize Helen's authority, she responds by making Faust co-regent of her realm. Here the action of the play echoes a favorite theme of nineteenth-century German historiography. This was the idea that, when the invasions of the Roman Empire by the German tribes shattered the despotic authority of the classical world, it allowed the reinvigorating force of German freedom to produce a fruitful combination of freedom and authority within the feudal system. The co-regency and the marriage of Helen and Faust represent this union, just as they also represent the final phase of Goethe's own poetic evolution from *Sturm und Drang* to classical to a synthesis of both styles. Lynceus' words, "*Wir drängten fort, wir stürmten fort*" (9289) literally recall the *Sturm und Drang* movement, and when Faust and his followers come under Helen's sway it forecasts the synthesis of this literary style with the classical. The subsequent scene, where Faust teaches Helen—whose speech had been metered but not rhymed—how to add to her words the feeling conveyed by rhyme, reinforces this theme.[78]

The poetic and psychological meanings of Faust's union with Helen parallel the political symbolism of their marriage. The developments following the lessons in poetry point up the political result of this synthesis of the Germanic with the classical. Phorkyas enters to warn the loving couple of an impending attack by Menelaus, and Faust responds by organizing his forces. Each of his tribes, Goths, Saxons, Franks, and so on, receives a different province of the Peloponnesus on the understanding that they will defend it on behalf of Helen. In essence, he constructs a feudal hierarchy:[79]

> I hail you with the ducal title
> Thus bids the Queen from Sparta's throne
> Valleys and hills in glad requital
> Lay at her feet, her wealth your own.

Faust's instructions reveal that, as was customary in feudal relationships, the German dukes receive the land for their use in return for their military service: "There each in settled habitation,/Fire, strength to outward foes make known."[80] But he also leaves no doubt that Helen of Sparta retains the supreme authority: "Still Sparta will rule over you [*euch berthronen*]" (9476).

The relationships between lord and vassals involved reciprocal obligations within a hierarchy headed by Helen's Sparta.[81]

> There in your single powers residing,
> Rejoice in wealth as in her sight;
> And, at her feet, seek faith-abiding
> Authority and law and light.

Faust's words describe a balance between the individual prerogatives of the feudal lords and the central authority of Sparta, which parallels his earlier "free and true" acknowledgment of Helen as his liege lady. Within this ideal feudal order the authority of the monarch and the various rights or freedoms of the vassals were to coexist in harmony.

The third scene of the Helena reveals the dangers inherent in the loss of this balance between freedom and authority. The marriage of Faust and Helen proves fruitful when she gives birth to a son, Euphorion, but the boy resembles his father much more than his mother. He exhibits boundless energy, completely lacks any kind of restraint:[82]

> Let me be springing
> Let me be leaping
> Pressing on, mounting
> Through the clouds sweeping…

This recklessness forces Faust into the unusual position of urging caution, but Euphorion ignores the advice of both father and mother.[83]

> Still will I leap ever higher,
> Still a wider world survey.
> Now perceive I where I stand,
> In the midst of Pelops' land…

Here Goethe's poetry presents Euphorion quite directly as the representative of Byron and the Greek cause. Standing in the midst of the Peloponnesus, the center of Greek resistance to the Turks, Euphorion declares:[84]

> All whom this land has bred,
> Ever on peril fed,

Free their own blood to spend
In courage without end—…
May these from toils of war
Have noble gain.

Despite the warnings of Helen, Faust, and the Chorus, Euphorion, like Byron, renounces the role of the spectator in favor of action and engagement:[85]

Shall I view from far disaster?
Nay, their bitter woes I'll share.

As with Byron, Euphorion's high aspirations lead him directly to an early death.

The actions and the fate of Euphorion accurately convey the complexity of Goethe's views on Byron and the cause of Greek freedom. Despite his sympathy for the Greeks, Goethe saw their uncontrolled, and selfish freedom as dangerously destructive. In his tragic climb to the mountain heights Euphorion declares, "*Keine Wälle, Keine Mauern,* \ *Jeder nur sich selbst bewusst* (No walls, no restraints, \ Each aware only of himself.)" (9855–56). In his lack of self-control and disregard for social integration, Euphorion ignores what Goethe regarded as the basic prerequisites for true freedom. Following the death of Euphorion, the chorus explicitly emphasizes the contrast between this sort of wild freedom and genuine freedom of the will. They lament, "*Doch du ranntest unaufhaltsam* \ *Frei ins willenlose Netz,* \ *So entzweitest du gewaltsam* \ *Dich mit Sitte, mit Gesetz*" (Thus you ran headlong \ Free into a will-less net, \ Thus did you forcefully separate \ Yourself from morality and law) (9923–26). Euphorion's fate mirrors what Goethe observed of Byron, that with "the most unbounded personal freedom…the world was sill a prison to him. His going to Greece was not a decision of his own free will [*freiwilliger Entschluss*]; his troubled relationship with the world drove him there."[86] As Goethe saw it, a lack of restraint in the pursuit of boundless personal freedom produced a destructive enslavement to passion.

Nonetheless, as Goethe saw it, Byron did accept restraints in his poetry if not in his life (as shown by his adherence to the classical unities of time, space, and action), so he could legitimately associate him with Euphorion as a symbol of modern poetry. Eckermann notes that in a discussion of Byron's poetic genius he stated his opinion that

Goethe had been "completely right in establishing for him [Byron] in the Helena an undying monument of his love." To which Goethe replied, "I could use no one, as the representative of the modern poetic era, other than he, who is without question the greatest talent of the century. Moreover, Byron is neither antique nor romantic, but is like the present day itself."[87] Euphorion and Byron could exemplify the poetic spirit and convey its uplifting, and hence liberating, quality. As Euphorion pursues his dangerous climb up the mountain heights, the chorus declares, "Mounting to heaven, see \ Blest soul of Poesie! \ Shine out, you fairest star, \ Far, ay, and ever far."[88] As presented in this passage, the inspiring role of poetry reflects Goethe's belief that honoring something above us makes us free. Goethe uses Euphorion's tragic death near the end of Act III to provide a memorial honoring Byron for striving for high ideals in his poetry; the stage directions openly allude to him when they observe, "We believe we recognize in the dead boy a well known figure" (9902–3).

With respect to the ideal of freedom, however, the impulsive actions of Euphorion and Byron serve primarily as negative examples which prepare the way for the positive treatment of this issue presented in Act V. The ideal of balance and moderation Faust found in Helen gradually reshapes his mentality as he becomes more involved in productive social activity. At the beginning of Act IV when he formulates his last great project, he looks out from a mountain top toward the Dutch coast and envisions a land reclamation plan that symbolizes the hoped-for resolution of his long inner conflict between reason and passion. Observing the destructive force of the waves, he declares:[89]

> There wave on wave, by hidden power heaved,
> Reigns and recedes, and nothing is achieved.
> This thing can sadden me to desperation,
> Wild elements in aimless perturbation!
> To soar beyond itself aspired my soul:
> Here would I strive and this would I control.

In Act V, Faust attempts to transform his vision into reality when he gains control of this territory and sets about building dikes and draining the land. But even this socially constructive task leads to the tragic death of Baucis and Philemon when Faust, out of impatience, calls on Mephisto's magic powers to deprive them of their land.

The death of Baucis and Philemon produces a serious moral crisis for Faust because it results from his egotistical desire to remove their hut in order to provide an unobstructed view of his accomplishments. Understanding the consequences of his immoral action, however, allows him to achieve a new level of self-mastery. Alone in his palace he observes, "I have not yet fought my way to freedom," [11403] and he realizes he must renounce the devil's aid to achieve true autonomy. When the fearful apparition of Care confronts him in the following scene, he refuses to rely on magic to avoid being harmed. This results in his being blinded, but his personal loss brings inner enlightenment. He declares, "Deep falls the night, in gloom precipitate;/What then? Clear light within my mind shines still;"[90] Faust's blindness represents an appropriate punishment for the moral weakness that caused the Baucis and Philemon tragedy, (his vain desire "To look on all that I've achieved"),[91] and, more positively, it indicates that inner reason will henceforth prevail over the temptations of the external world in determining his actions.

Following the moral philosophies of J. J. Rousseau and Immanuel Kant, Goethe presents Faust as achieving true freedom by learning to control his selfish impulses in favor of the common good of society. Blinded to the outer world, Faust relies on the inner light of moral reason to enunciate his last great vision of the future:[92]

> I work that millions may possess this space,
> If not secure, a free and active race…
> A paradise our closed-in land provides,
> Though to its margin rage the blustering tides;…
> Here wisdom speaks its final word and true,
> None is of freedom or of life deserving
> Unless he daily conquers it anew…
> Such busy, teeming throngs I long to see,
> Standing on freedom's soil, a people free.

Freedom results from self-imposed order, which channels and controls selfish emotional energies just as the dikes control and utilize the aimless power of the sea.

The concept of freedom that emerges in Act V reflects not only the moral freedom described in the philosophies of Kant and Rousseau but also the aristocratic tradition described by Leonard Krieger in *The German Idea of Freedom*. For Kant and Rousseau ethical conduct became

possible when the individual recognized the moral law of the general will or the categorical imperative as superior to his selfish desires for individual advantage, and he gained autonomy and freedom from the slavery of these desires by a rational decision to subject himself to this higher moral law. This has an exact analogue in the tradition of aristocratic freedom, which also rested on the individual's recognition of a higher order. In the ideal feudal hierarchy a lord's freedoms or liberties extended only to his own domain or fief, where he was autonomous, and he only exercised those liberties after acknowledging loyalty to his overlord. Goethe provides an example of this idealized medieval social model in his description of Helen's relationships with her vassals in Act III. And he follows it with a contrasting example of late medieval disintegration, to illustrate the dangers of unlimited freedom, at the end of Act IV, where the Emperor tells the five great vassals to whom he has foolishly granted the major parts of his realm "Indeed as lords you have possession completely free (*Zwar habt ihr den Besitz als Herren völlig frei*)" [10967]. This more chaotic, particularist, heritage of the feudal tradition provides the context for the modern world which begins to emerge in Act V, for Faust can only attempt to realize his great project because he has gained the coastal territory as a fief from the Emperor[93] in return for the indispensible military service he previously provided. But in contrast to the weak Emperor, who allows all real authority to slip away, Faust becomes a powerful and dynamic ruler.[94] Having achieved autonomy in his confrontation with Care, Faust ignores his blindness and immediately commands his subjects to complete his project, declaring "What I conceived I hasten to complete; / The lord's word alone gives weight" (11501–2). For Goethe, as always, true freedom was associated with authority.

IV

Demonstrating how the political events of the 1820s influenced the conception of freedom Goethe wove into *Faust Two* requires a close consideration of when those passages of the work dealing with the issue of freedom took shape. With respect to Act V, opinion remains sharply divided about when Goethe wrote the various sections. A comment he made in August 1815 about the conclusion of the Faust poem provides the mainstay for one position. At that time he observed that "it is already finished, and is very well turned out and

imposing, out of the best time."[95] The reference to the "best time" apparently refers to the period of Goethe's close friendship with Friedrich Schiller around 1800, but how much Goethe later added to Act V, and exactly how much of this early "finished" version he retained, remains in dispute. No one questions that he had largely completed the first half of the opening scene (lines 8489–802) by about 1800,[96] and the idea of Faust's encounter with Helen certainly goes back to the poem's original design. Karl Meissinger argues that this early material decisively shaped the subsequent continuation of Act III and that the later parts of the Helena reflect the basic conception which developed around 1800 when Goethe's thoughts were strongly influenced by Schiller. Meissinger believes that "the decisive idea of the Helena act was already at hand in a fully developed form in 1800. It lay in the unprecedented boldness of bringing together the medieval-modern man Faust with Helen, the essence of antique beauty, . . . [thereby conveying] the idea of an *aesthetic education* of the hero through the purity and discipline of the antique."[97] Meissinger rightly emphasizes the importance of Goethe's earlier association with Schiller to the development of this idea, but he fails to appreciate the complex historical relationship which tied this idea to the issue of freedom.

Schiller developed his influential ideas about the nature of the beautiful and the sublime out of Kant's moral and aesthetic philosophy, and he believed in a close relationship between the good and the beautiful. Meissinger observes that "through an aesthetic education one could prepare people for the good . . . The beautiful is the light rainbow bridge over the chasm which for the first time makes believable to the sensualist, to the cowardly slave of the desires, the possibility of a passage into the realm of freedom."[98] This concept finds embodiment in the role of Helen in *Faust Two* where she, as the representative of the beautiful, points the way to Faust's eventual passage (in Act V) into the realm of morality and freedom. This important element of Goethe's treatment of Helen undoubtedly does go back to the time of Goethe's association with Schiller, and owes much to his influence, but Meissinger greatly underestimates the importance of Goethe's further development of the Helena in the wake of Byron's death. He writes that "Byron's death gave the impetus to the completion of the third act and also of Part Two. The figure of Euphorion absorbs into itself the great mass of experiences with which Goethe's great practical wisdom had been enriched by a quarter century of

romanticism." But he then goes on to argue that "for the over-all movement of the action in *Faust*…this enrichment of the third act is without significance."[99] Meissinger fails to consider that the "quarter century of romanticism" to which he refers also included world-transforming events about which Goethe cared deeply. Goethe wove allusions to these events into his poem in a way that shows that they influenced the work at all levels.

Goethe's experiences with the French Revolution, and the Napoleonic wars that swept Europe in its aftermath, had a particularly important impact on the themes and ideas he developed in *Faust Two*. They made him hostile to all revolutionary movements and left him with a deep skepticism about the advocacy of political freedom. The fourth act of *Faust Two* alludes to the chaos and disorder of the period in a way that shows Goethe's belief that such disorder undercut the possibility of any true freedom. The events of the 1820s, however, produced a subtle but important shift in his views. Goethe's love of ancient Greek culture gradually brought him to support the Greek War of Independence despite the fact that its success involved a breach in the conservative system he had previously seen as a bulwark against revolutionary disorder. This qualified support of the Greek cause nonetheless left him at odds with such philhellenes as Jeremy Bentham and Leicester Stanhope, whose revolutionary freedom he regarded as dangerously destabilizing. The death of Byron gave him an opportunity to put forth in *Faust Two* an alternative to this revolutionary position, an alternative which drew not only on the aristocratic, particularist tradition of freedom, with its implicit acceptance of hierarchical limits, but also on Schiller's idea of the beautiful as a manifestation of freedom in the world of phenomena, an idea which also rests on the acceptance of limits. Absorbing Byron into the figure of Euphorion, he was able to use Act III to contrast the negative example of a life destroyed by unrestrained freedom with the positive model of beauty provided by Byron's poetry, which united passion with discipline.

Faust's further activities in the final two acts drew out the political implications of this conception of freedom. Having learned the important lessons of balance and restraint from Helen and Euphorion, he then went on in Act IV to participate in the political struggle between the Emperor and Anti-Emperor, a conflict which alluded to the central historical events of Goethe's life: the overthrow of the *Ancien Regime*, the Napoleonic wars, and the Restoration. Faust

provides morally questionable (magical) support for the Emperor, which allows him to defeat the Anti-Emperor (Napoleon), but even so this ruler's own weakness leads to the disintegration of his state. Then in Act V, when Faust becomes lord of his own domain, he can attempt to realize his final vision of a freedom combining striving with self-control. This final stage of Faust's development reveals the political ideal of Goethe's final years. Having achieved personal freedom through self-mastery, Faust represents the effective enlightened ruler who can bring both technological progress and disciplined freedom to his people.

However much Goethe may owe to Schiller and the ideas from the "best period," in providing a foundation for the concluding developments of his drama, Faust's final vision of freedom, and the conception of an enlightened government based on that vision, took shape in the mid-1820s, after the death of Byron, and reflects the influence of that time. Alexander Hohlfeld has found convincing evidence that in the "Midnight," "Great Outer-court of the Palace," and "Burial" scenes of Act V, the key passages, containing the most important formulations of Goethe's concept of freedom, date from the time after Byron's death. Hohlfeld notes that the 1826 manuscript version of Faust's last speech, which describes his great land reclamation project, contains an unresolved conflict between the idea of simply draining water from a swampy area and the much grander project of pushing back the sea with dykes and breakwaters. He argues that the former was the earlier concept, perhaps dating back to the "best time," and that it was overtaken in 1825–26 by the idea of Faust as a fighter against the destructive power of the sea, a theme, which underlies key parts of Acts IV and V in the final version.[100]

Hohlfeld's evidence ties this important change to specific events occurring in the winter of 1824–25. At that time Goethe was working on a project involving meteorology, his *Versuch einer Witterungslehre*, and his diary entry of February 25, 1825, comments on the unusual weather events occurring at that time. This same diary entry indicates that he has also begun to think about *Faust* again after having put it aside for many years. On the following two days his diary entries show that he has resumed working on *Faust* and has assembled his previously written materials. A further diary entry of March 4 again shows him thinking about *Faust* and his meteorological project at the same time. In his *Versuch einer Witterungslehre*, Goethe personalizes the elements, calling them mankind's colossal opponent "which

always has the drive [*Trieb*] to pursue its own wild, destructive way." He foresaw an eternal struggle in which mankind might at certain times gain control "through the highest power of the spirit, through courage and cunning." In the final versions of Acts IV and V, Faust has taken Goethe's meteorological lesson to heart. He also personalizes the sea as an expression of his own wild inner feelings and drives, and his struggle against the sea serves as the vehicle for conveying the psychological concept of gaining freedom through the imposition of self-control. With the death of Byron in the previous year, Goethe had gained the possibility of using a famous contemporary figure to illustrate this psychological theme, and when, in early 1825, his meteorological project showed him how to unite this theme with the analogous one of taming the sea, he had all the elements he needed to resume work on *Faust Two* and give its conclusion the new direction it took in the final version.[101]

Although parts of the "Midnight," "Great Outer-court," and "Burial" scenes may go back to the period before the 1820s, Hohlfeld shows that only a few lines of Faust's final speech could possibly have originated then. Moreover, the various preserved manuscript fragments relevant to this passage show that the references to freedom are all later additions. For example, lines 11579–80 of the finished poem read: "Such busy, teeming throngs I long to see, / Standing on freedom's soil, a people free, [*Auf freiem Grund mit freiem Volke stehn,*]" but in the early version they read: "There I will live among you, / Standing truly on my own soil and land, [*Auf warhaft eigenem Grund und Boden stehn*]."[102] The earlier version also lacks the other references to freedom in this speech (lines 11564 and 11575). Similarly, in the earlier manuscript fragments of the "Midnight" scene, Faust's line [11403]: "I have not yet fought my way to freedom, [*Noch hab' ich mich ins Freie nicht gekämpft,*]" does not appear.[103] Hohlfeld's evidence and that of the manuscript fragments show conclusively that, following Byron's death, Goethe altered his existing plans for the conclusion of *Faust Two* to make a compelling argument for his idea of true freedom. The fundamental elements of that concept had long been in place in his mind, but Byron's death in the Greek cause gave him an opportunity to advance his conception as an alternative to an idea of freedom that he saw as both empty and dangerous.

Goethe regarded the activities of the Benthamite philhellenes as both foolish and dangerous. In a certain sense, he seems to have seen himself as contending with the Benthamite radicals for the

soul of enlightened Europe. He regarded the capacity for freedom as one of the highest traits of human nature, and he believed that Bentham and his followers had misunderstood and misused it. Goethe compared himself to Bentham in an interesting way in a March 1830 conversation with Friedrich Soret, just two years before he and Bentham were to die. He observed that, in contrast to the "idiots" who did not have the courage to live a long life, Bentham, "this grand fool of a radical, is holding out well, although he is several weeks my senior." When Soret remarked that they were also similar in their youthful vitality, Goethe responded, "It is true, but we are at the two ends of the chain. He wants to tear down; for myself I would like to preserve everything. To be so radical at his age is the height of extravagance." Soret then commented that there were two kinds of radicalism, "One which at the risk of turning everything upside down wishes to tear down in order to reconstruct" and a second kind, which "recognizes the weak parts of a government, points out its vices, indicates the means to remedy them, and wishes to produce the good without using violent means. Your Excellency, transported to the soil of England, would not be able to avoid this second type of radicalism."[104] The contrast between the critical descriptions of the old order in the second and fourth acts of *Faust Two* and the progressive world of Act V lends support to Soret's point.

For Goethe political freedom could not be detached from the concept of free will, an idea which had no place in Bentham's mechanistic philosophy, and following Kant and Schiller Goethe associated free will with self-imposed authority. Where Bentham and his followers feared that the newly liberated Greeks might succumb to authoritarian rule, Goethe feared a chaotic disintegration of authority such as he described in the medieval German context of *Faust Two* Acts II and IV. After Ioannes Kapodistrias became President of the Greek Republic in 1828 Goethe predicted that he would not last long because, "he is no soldier. We have no example in which a cabinet man has been able to organize a revolutionary state and subordinate the military and the generals to himself. With a saber in the fist, at the head of an army one may command and give orders, and one can be sure of being obeyed." Goethe assured Eckermann that he would see his prediction fulfilled because "it lies in the nature of things."[105] In fact Kapodistrias was murdered three years later, and the Holy Alliance eventually forced Greece to accept a monarchy.

Goethe's conviction that a revolutionary republic would fail rested on the close relationship he saw between freedom and authority. The German idea of freedom involved the acknowledgement of some higher authority, which imposed limits on the expression of individual interests and inclinations, and for Goethe the disorder of revolution made the acceptance of such limits impossible. Holding to the ideal of enlightened reform from above, he advanced in *Faust Two* a concept of freedom, which established the achievement of individual moral autonomy as a fundamental element of a just political order. Such a conception of freedom, nourished in the essentially conservative cultural and political context of central Europe, necessarily tended to turn the attention of the individual seeking reform in an inward direction, thus reinforcing the "*innerlichkeit,*" which is so prominent a feature of the German cultural landscape. While western European radicals such as Bentham had little patience for the metaphysical refinements of this inwardness, it contributed to that second kind of radicalism to which Soret referred.

The debate between Goethe and the Benthamites about the Greek War of Independence and the nature of freedom speaks to the complex heritage of the emerging European liberal tradition. One of the most eminent representatives of that tradition, John Stuart Mill, endured a rigorous education in Benthamite philosophy, and when he found its neglect of the inner emotional realm unsatisfying, turned to what he called the Germanic school of Kant and Goethe to redress the balance.[106] Sigmund Freud, another prominent thinker immersed in the liberal tradition, drew on the English tradition of Bentham and Mill while continuing to value Goethe and the other psychologically informed writers of the German classical period for their insights into the operations of the mind, and he used the example of Faust's great project to contain and channel the force of the sea to illustrate the interplay between a rational ego and the emotional forces of the id.[107] Faust's vision of a free people on freedom's soil rested on a psychological conception of freedom that saw the individual as an active, autonomous force capable of improving the world by using reason to channel and control the otherwise destructive forces of human passion. For Mill and Freud, as well as many other representatives of nineteenth-century liberal culture, Goethe's conservative contribution to the liberal tradition provided an invaluable vista into the workings of the human personality.

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2

Freedom in Architecture: Gottfried Semper and the Greek Ideal

In 1834, when Gottfried Semper published the results of the archeological research he had recently carried out on his extensive travels in southern Italy and Greece, he adorned the title page of his first publication with an apt quotation from Goethe's *Faust*: "All theory, dear friend, is grey, but the golden tree of life is green."[1] These "colorful" lines, spoken by Mephistopheles as a warning to one of Faust's students, alluded to the subject of Semper's work, which championed the newly emerging view that ancient Greek sculpture and architecture had originally been brightly painted. Semper's work challenged the still dominant position of Johann Joachim Winckelmann, who had praised the "noble simplicity and quiet grandeur" of these works, on the assumption that they had always had a finished surface of white marble. For Winckelmann, the beauty of the classical ideal lay in its unadorned presentation of pure form, and his aesthetic of pure form had been widely accepted as basic to an understanding of ancient Greek art and architecture and to the field of aesthetic theory in general. So in addition to the appropriate reference to color, the lines from *Faust* also pointed up a theoretical position that seemed increasingly arid and isolated from physical evidence that, in their original condition, the great monuments of Greek art reflected a dimension of real life not represented in Winckelmann's ideal.[2]

Semper's publication on the polychrome controversy appeared when he was only 31, and it marked the beginning of a distinguished career, not only as an influential architect and teacher, but also as an innovative aesthetic theorist. To attain great prominence both as a creative artist and as a theoretician of art was a rare achievement, and for the late nineteenth-century intellectual historian

Wilhelm Dilthey this unusual combination marked Semper as one of the great creative spirits of his time. Dilthey criticized historians of aesthetics for overestimating the value of speculative theory, and he argued that this one-sidedness had caused them to neglect Semper, even though "in our century aesthetics owes more to him than to anyone." The fact that Semper's aesthetic theories and his work on ancient Greek culture influenced both Richard Wagner and Friedrich Nietzsche, in the development of their widely influential theories of art, supports this claim. Dilthey looked back to Goethe as the ideal example of an artist and aesthetician who had achieved "a well-balanced approach to art which also encompasses the sensuous and technical aspects." Semper followed in this tradition: "In his approach to art, he was the real successor to Goethe, everywhere following the latter's reflections about imagination, artistic creation, and style."[3] In his own career, then, Semper heeded the warning of Goethe's Mephistopheles by seeking to insure that his intellectual efforts in the grey realm of theory were always closely tied to the vital reality of life.

Semper expressed his belief in the unity of theory and life through an active involvement in the sometimes dramatic events of his time. Born in 1803, he had witnessed the tumultuous changes of the Napoleonic era during his childhood, and as a young man he developed an enduring sympathy for the revolutionary forces that periodically challenged the established order after the restorations of 1815. He strongly sympathized with the Greeks in their war of liberation and with the July Revolution of 1830 in France. At the time of the revolution Semper was living in Paris, studying architecture with Franz Gau, a native of Cologne, who had settled in Paris during the Napoleonic period. Gau had recently published an important study of ancient polychrome decoration in Nubia, and he introduced Semper to the work of Jakob Ignaz Hittorff, a prominent architect and archeologist whose investigation of Greek architecture in Sicily led him to argue for the existence of a single polychrome decorative system for all Greek architecture.

For Semper, who had studied the language and history of classical Greece at Göttingen, the issue of ancient polychromy provided an ideal research topic to round out his architectural studies with Gau, so shortly after the 1830 revolution he set out to look for remaining traces of paint on the important monuments of Greek architecture in Southern Italy and in newly liberated Greece. Holding the common

belief of Philhellenes that the freedom of ancient Greece had sparked its cultural creativity, Semper attempted to understand the inspiring role of Greek freedom within the framework of the German idea of freedom he shared with Goethe.

I

Semper undertook his research trip to Italy and Greece in the spirit of Mephistopheles' advice to Faust's student, avoiding any dichotomy between theory and life. The trip lasted a long time, from the fall of 1830 through the summer of 1833,[4] and though useful, his initial work in Rome, Naples, and Sicily did not offer the scope for original research that he subsequently found in Greece. There, the warfare and unsettled conditions of the 1820s had precluded any significant archeological investigation of polychromy, so he enjoyed a clear field for his investigations. Leaving by boat from Messina, Sicily, in August 1831, Semper and his traveling companion, Jules Goury, arrived on the Greek mainland at Navarino (now Pylos), after a brief stop at the island of Zakynthos. Semper's travel memoirs indicate his lively interest in the folk customs of the modern Greeks. He described their traditional costumes in detail, and soon after his arrival he made his way into the mountains of Messenia to participate in a folk festival where he ate with his fingers while the young Greeks sang "songs about love and freedom to strumming lutes."[5]

Semper's travel account conveys his enthusiasm for the Greeks and their recently attained freedom. In addition to commenting on the freedom songs of the folk festival, he also notes with interest that high up on the sides of the mountains he could still see the "small grottoes, which once were closed with doors made of crude tree trunks . . . These are the refuge caves of the inhabitants of the surrounding area, from which in secure concealment they mocked the pursuing Turks."[6] Semper also seemed to take pride in sharing the hardships of these Greeks, who had sacrificed so much to secure their freedom. At one of his stops, he reported, "The coffeehouse is also the only shelter in the place. Mixed together with the free Hellenes we stretched out our tired limbs on the hard board benches."[7] With this sort of interested involvement in the lives and customs of the modern Greeks, Semper gradually made his way to Athens where he remained for months, closely examining the architectural monuments of their ancient ancestors.[8]

For Semper the crowning achievement of Greek art was the Parthenon.[9] During his lengthy stay in Athens, Semper pursued the riddle of ancient polychromy by scouring the Parthenon and other buildings on the acropolis, as well as the temple of Theseus in the agora, for any remaining traces of color. He made almost 200 drawings, including some showing the results of his research in the form of fully colored reconstructions of parts of the Parthenon.[10] Semper later wrote that he and his companion Goury had "spent two full months just on the Theseum, which certainly had not been investigated under more favorable circumstances either before or after, since at that time no one observed our activities."[11] Using a "hanging scaffold" he had discovered traces of red on the pillars as well as in other areas, and here again he produced elaborate color drawings of the temple's decorative scheme (figures 2.1–2.4).[12]

In the *Preliminary Remarks* that Semper published on his return from his travels, he indicated his intention to follow it with a multivolume work presenting the results of his research in detail, with colored lithographs, copper plates, and a commentary. The first volume would include "the Doric Order illustrated on the Parthenon, presented from the author's careful measurements of the construction and details, with special regard given to the color system and complementary decorations of bronze and so forth."[13] Semper never actually published this more detailed study, but his *Preliminary Remarks* contains the basic elements of his highly original explanation for the origins of Greek polychromy as well as other key elements of aesthetic theories that he went on to develop further in later works.

In contrast to earlier authors, who had usually tied polychromy to southern light and climate, Semper took an historical approach that emphasized the idea that the decorative elements of Greek temples had evolved out of early religious practices. He argued that painting and the carving of decorative elements had developed in a reciprocal process from primitive times to the age of Pericles, and he examined the specific case of the bead molding to give a detailed account of what this might have involved. Semper believed that the process began with a braid of wool from a sacrificial animal hung in a crude enclosure devoted to religious worship, and that later this evolved into the practice of painting or scratching the sacrificial braid on the wall to represent an object that had acquired religious significance. Subsequently this representation became more realistic in a series of

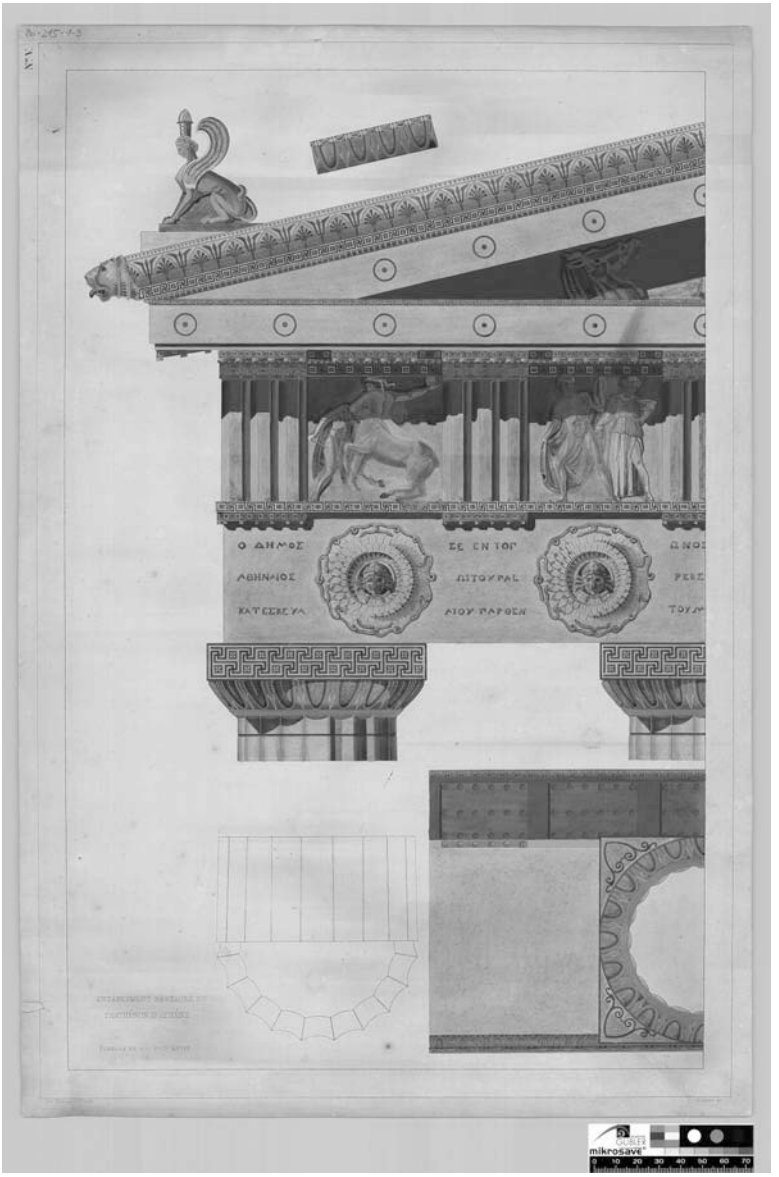


Figure 2.1 Semper's detailed watercolor drawing of fragment of Parthenon pediment. Image provided by Instituts für Geschichte und Theorie der Architektur an der Eidgenössischen Technischen Hochschule, Zurich.

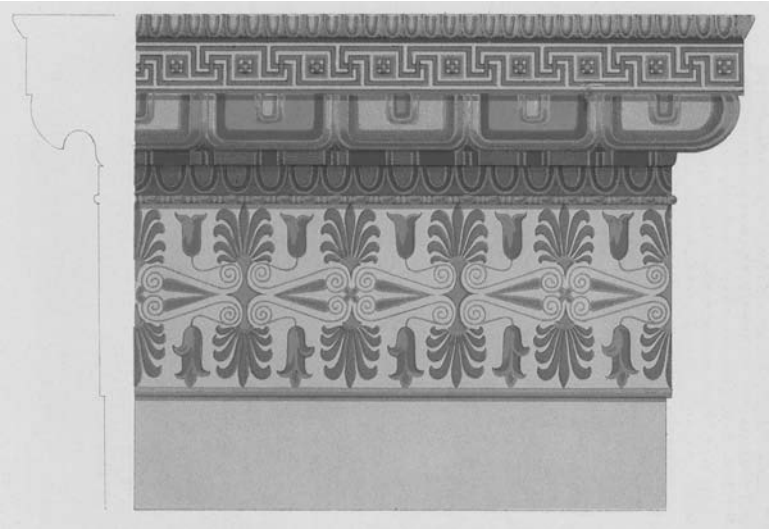


Figure 2.2 Detail of capital from the Temple of Theseus at Athens. From Gottfried Semper, *Der Stil*, 1878, Plate I, Antenkapital vom Theseustempel zu Athen Theseustempels zu Athen.

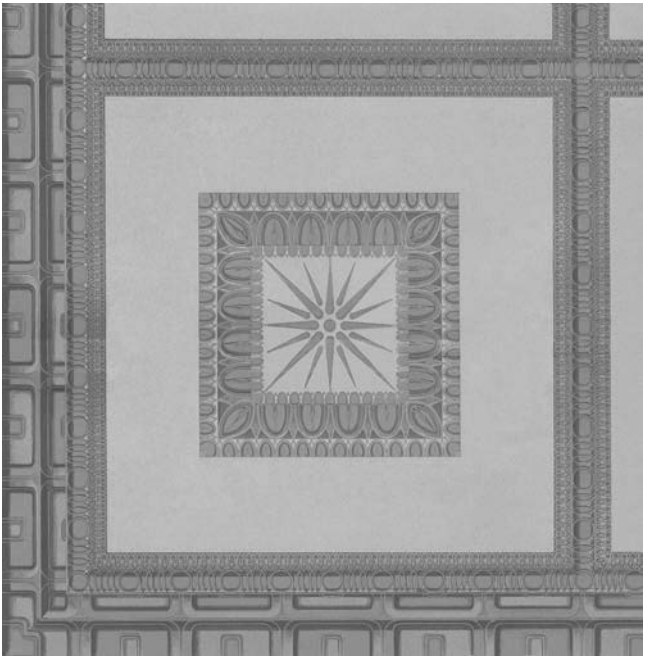


Figure 2.3 Ceiling field from the Temple of Theseus at Athens. From Gottfried Semper, Der Stil, 1878, Plate V.

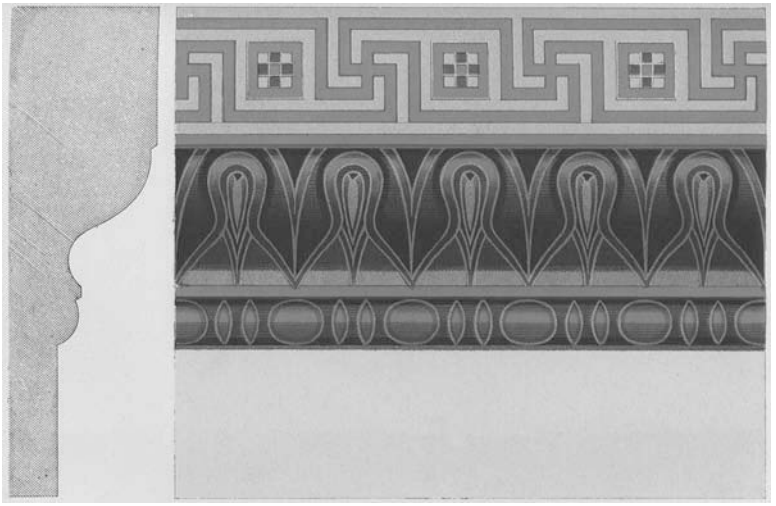


Figure 2.4 Crowning ornaments of the architrave on the opistodom of the Temple of Theseus at Athens. From Gottfried Semper, Der Stil, 1878, Plate IX.

steps that involved ever deeper carving into the wall, complemented by increasingly sophisticated use of paint and shadow to suggest the roundedness of the object. The final result was a molding "where notching changed the surface into a string of beads. Here, too, colors increased the effect."[14] Semper further argued that bas-relief and then sculpture, also fully painted, had evolved from flat wall painting in a similar development.[15]

Semper's solution to the riddle of polychromy emerged directly from his belief in an original unity of the arts. In the historical process he described, "a whole series of transitions gradually developed. Painting remained within the sphere of sculpture, and sculpture intensified its effects through painting. Everything from the free-standing statue and the round boss to painting with flat tones stood at the disposal of the creative mind."[16] The architect drew the various arts together: "Under the architect's supervision the monument became the quintessence of the arts; as an unified work of art, it was defined, developed, and sustained in its details."[17] While not new, this theory of an original unity of the arts became all the more compelling by virtue of the historical theory Semper proposed to explain its origins in ancient Greek culture, where the arts worked together

"as a chorus" led by the architect. Semper's friend, Richard Wagner, later studied and used this architectural conception of the unified work of art to develop an analogous theoretical model for his musical dramas.[18]

Semper's belief in the unity of the arts paralleled his conviction that art always bore a close relationship to the politics and culture of its time. Referring to his own era, which had been so powerfully shaped by the aftershocks of the French Revolution, he wrote, "With the political storms that have arisen since the end of the past century a new upheaval in art has taken place at the same time. Politics and art have always gone hand in hand."[19] This perspective shaped his opinions about what had produced the greatness of ancient Greek art. He drew a strong contrast between the architecture that enjoyed the benefits of Greek freedom and that created by the despotic empires of the eastern Mediterranean, where, in cities like Babylon, Persepolis, or Palmyra "regular streets, mile-wide squares, stately halls and palaces impatiently await in their sad emptiness the population that the despotic ruler was unable to conjure." In contrast to these architectural expressions of despotism, he observed that "The organic life of Greek art . . . flourishes only on the soil of need and under the sun of freedom."[20] This apparently paradoxical pairing of freedom with necessity, or need, marks the influence of the German idea of freedom in Semper's analysis, as does his explanation of what he meant by need: "The most important need of a nation in every respect, including art, is its religion and system of government."[21] In the democratic city state of the ancient Greeks, art and architecture directly served the needs of the population. "How organically everything in the city sprouted up, its markets, stoas, temple precincts, gymnasia, basilicas, theaters, and baths. Everything was situated to promote civic spirit and the public welfare."[22] In the German tradition, true freedom only became possible under the constraints of a higher good—whether religious or civic. Semper prized the sense of community associated with such public spaces. Dispensing with overpowering scale and symmetry, "the monuments stood where importance and destination demanded, seemingly without rules, but determined by the highest conceptual laws of the political system. Everything was concentrated in a small area and scaled to the people and thereby became impressive."[23] For Semper the creative genius of Greek art and architecture sprang from its freedom in a unity with

life and human need rather than from the abstract conceptions of a despotic patron.

Semper also took an historical approach to explain freedom's role in the flowering of Greek art. Semper assumed that Greek architecture had been richly decorated in its earliest beginnings, and he saw an antithetical relationship between freedom and this emphasis on material richness. He compared prehistoric Greece with "other patriarchal states in which material comfort was substituted for the exaltation of freedom."[24] He believed that over time, "This glittering chaos sorted itself out. Order and style came into being. The regulating law, manipulated by tyrannical guilds grim and severe, ruled for long thereafter before a liberating genius dared to transcend the antiquated forms and limits of mediocrity."[25] This led to the great age, when "aroused genius brought maturity, fullness and freedom; art evolved from the teeming, flowering mass into glorious fruit." Semper maintained that Greek literature had followed a similar path, evolving from folk songs and myths to "the highest perfection with the rise of the Free States."[26]

In explaining the specific historical process through which freedom contributed to the artistic creativity of ancient Greece, Semper drew on the German conception of freedom that linked it closely to law and discipline. Of the period from the end of the sixth to the beginning of the fifth-century BC, he wrote "Then the spark of Prometheus kindled the spirit and awakened the fire of freedom and political self-reliance. With the fight for freedom against internal tyrants and foreign invaders grew and matured that amazing vigor by which Greece raised itself above all nations of all times."[27] This awakened spirit immediately manifested itself in the sphere of art: "The genius of art unfurled its wings and found the restrictive forms imposed on art to be too narrow. The severe style had to yield."[28] But the freedom that was so essential to creative genius could also go too far, and Semper found evidence of this in certain architectural monuments. He believed that before the great age, "a short period of revolutionary excess preceded the art of Ictinus, Phidias, Polygnotus—the highest degree of freedom tamed by taste. The extravagant forms of the older temples, the exaggerated and grotesque reliefs on some Sicilian monuments lend credence to this supposition."[29] Semper reemphasized the point in discussing the realism of painted sculpture: "And even suppose we could become

too realistic (which perhaps is possible), would not painted sculpture remain always governed by convention? Taste and convention, both are healthy counterweights to unbounded freedom in art!"[30] The perfection achieved in the Parthenon, and in the sculpture of the Periclean age, reflected a balance between unlimited freedom and the constraining influence of taste and convention.

II

In his *Preliminary Remarks*, Semper only sketched the historical process behind the synthesis of freedom and discipline achieved in the great age of Greek art, but he went on in his later works to describe the process in much more detail. For the specifics of his historical understanding of this period, he relied closely on the work of Karl Ottfried Müller, who had taught Semper at Göttingen.[31] Müller believed that because the Dorian and Ionian tribes had settled in Greece at different times, they had developed quite distinct cultural and political values that they expressed in their different styles of art and architecture.[32] Semper alluded to these differences in his *Preliminary Remarks*, when he disputed J. I. Hittorff's assumption that a single color system governed the painting of all Greek architecture.[33] Semper believed that different Doric and Ionic color schemes developed as part of this larger contrast of cultural and artistic traditions. The interaction between the Doric and Ionic traditions provided the historical framework that Semper used to explain the unique synthesis achieved in classical Greek art, and in his subsequent publications he looked back to still earlier times to suggest how influences from the non-Greek cultures of the ancient Mediterranean world shaped these two distinct Greek traditions. In his most influential work, *Der Stil*, which he published in 1860–63, he dismissed the "outdated academic theory" according to which "Hellenic art is regarded as an original growth, native to the soil of Greece."[34] Noting that the ancient Greeks themselves frequently expressed great admiration for the architectural monuments of the "barbarians," Semper argued that "Hellenic art is also barbaric in its elements, and we must prepare to study it through research into these barbaric elements from which Hellenic art unfolded; we must again conjure up the true, living, corporeal Helen from the 'mothers.'"[35]

Like the quotation from *Faust Part One*, Semper had used on the title page of his *Preliminary Remarks* almost 30 years earlier, this allusion

to the scene in Goethe's *Faust Part Two*, where Faust conjures up the shade of Helen from the mysterious realm of the "mothers," provides an appropriate emblem for Semper's approach to his subject. In this scene, Helen symbolizes classical beauty, and she appears in the form of a disembodied apparition, called forth as a sort of parlor trick by Faust to entertain the imperial court (including an aged professor who finds Helen's actual presence too exciting). When Faust attempts to grasp her, however, the illusion explodes, forcing him to go back in time to discover what forces at work in the beginnings of Greek culture led to the birth of the real, living Helen. Semper's reference emphasizes the contrast between the illusion of Helen and her real, living being. In opposition to Winckelmann's followers, the learned professors who prized the pale shadow of ancient art by rejecting the idea of polychromy and isolating the art of ancient Greece from that of its "barbarian" neighbors, Semper would play the role of Faust in seeking the real Helen. Like Faust, he would go back to the earliest beginnings of Greek art to understand the physical, vital origins of its beauty.

Semper saw Greek art as "the magnificent blossoming, the final goal, the end result of an ancient formative principle, the roots of which, one might say, were widespread and deeply planted in the earth of all the lands which were in antiquity the seats of social systems."[36] The particular "creative genius of the Greeks," according to Semper, lay in their ability to absorb the artistic and architectural traditions that emerged from these neighboring civilizations and give them expression "in a *higher* sense, in a symbolism of form in which contradictions and principles that excluded and conflicted with each other in barbarian art, joined together in the freest cooperation and the richest, most beautiful harmony."[37] The most important of the conflicting principles that led to this Greek synthesis reached Greece by different routes from Asia and Africa. He writes, "Two antitheses present themselves: the architectural style of west Asia (the Chaldean-Assyrian) and that of Pharonic Egypt." The primary influence from Asia involved what Semper in his later writings termed *Bekleidung* (somewhat inadequately translated as "dressing" or "decoration"), a key concept that extended the early theory of polychrome painting to include a wide range of decorative elements. He argued that *Bekleidung* constituted "both the constructive and the ornamental principle of the late, fully developed Chaldean-Assyrian architectural style."[38] In Egyptian architecture,

by contrast, the structure "actually absorbs the dressing [*Bekleidung*]; the structure becomes massively stony."[39] Semper believed that the exposure of the Greeks to the contrasting artistic traditions of *Bekleidung* and structure, transmitted from these two neighboring civilizations, provided them with the basic ingredients they later used to achieve artistic greatness.

Semper aligned these two antithetical traditions, coming from Asia and Africa, with the two most important of the Greek tribes, the Ionians and Dorians, arguing that each introduced one of these traditions into Greece after being exposed to it in their different historical experiences before and during the time when they migrated into Greece. The greatness of Greek art and culture resulted from the sometimes antagonistic, sometimes cooperative, interaction between these tribal cultural values over the course of time. Initially their customs were strongly opposed: "The Ionians selected a democratic form of government after the expulsion of their dynastic rulers; the people succeeded the Oriental despot. Their will became law. The Dorians founded or were handed down a more stable form of society . . . The long-established priesthood with their appointed kings was their model."[40] The contrasts extended from the sphere of law and government into the practices of religion and art. "The temple-building tribe of Dorians stood as opposites to the poetic Ionians sacrificing on the mountain tops. The latter were related to the neighboring kindred tribes of Asia in their traditions; the former gathered their epic cycles from Egyptian soil, unless these mythical references were artificially contrived by the Dorian lawgivers."[41] The primitive conditions of early Greece prevented the kind of interaction between the different tribes that might have produced a broader cultural unity.[42]

Semper believed that when they first arrived in Greece, long after the other Greek tribes, the victorious Dorians simply imposed their own values on those they conquered. In this first stage of Dorian domination, according to Semper's historical overview: "The cult of Apollo . . . replaced the Asiatic cult of Baccus. Everything points to a hostile stand by the new leaders of society against Asiatic cultural elements. They based their system on laws that they borrowed in part from the hierarchic-aristocratic Egyptians and thus instilled into the former, poetic-Asiatic Hellenism, an urge to build temples."[43] Semper argued that, in continued isolation, this tradition would not have been genuinely creative. "Had their system been victorious, Hellenism

could never have arisen to its true characteristic glory; never could art have freed itself entirely from the chains by which it was bound in Egypt. Only where the free Ionic spirit was in command . . . was this goal attainable."[44] Eventually the interaction between the Dorians and the Ionians yielded a truly creative culture that drew on the traditions of both peoples. "Both labored on the edifice of Hellenism that first appeared in its perfection when the Doric form became fully imbued with the Ionic spirit and the people became both the monarch and priests, exalting themselves in their gods. The two opposites were united in a higher idea and a new free order."[45] This synthesis achieved its highest expression in "the more Ionic than Doric province of Attica,"[46] and in the temples of the acropolis, particularly the Parthenon.

This new free order emerged not just in politics and society, but also in the various arts. Semper focused particular attention on the role of freedom in the artistic activities of the Greeks during their great age, and the way he described that role shows the shaping influence of the German idea of freedom in his conceptual framework. One aspect of the role of freedom involved the interrelationship of the arts in the unified art work that Semper had first described in his *Preliminary Remarks*. Semper went on to argue in his *Four Elements of Architecture* that where "barbarian monuments" had achieved harmony "by fusing dependent parts into the idea of the whole," Greek art had reached a higher level through a different approach. "With the Greeks . . . this harmony could come about only through a free and circumscribed working together of elements of equal value, through a democracy of the arts."[47] This echoes an idea Semper had mentioned in his *Preliminary Remarks*, where he referred to the architect as the *choragus* (chorus leader) of the arts that were drawn together to build the Greek temple, and he adds the comment "his name even says it."[48] Semper had a good command of Greek and often used linguistic evidence to support his arguments. In classical Greek, the word for architect [*αρχιτέκτων*] meant director of works and, at Athens, "manager of the state theater and the Dionysia."[49] In that role he had the obligation to coordinate the various separate artistic elements to produce an effective unity. Semper pursues this latter point in his *Four Elements* when he explores the meaning of that peculiarly Greek democracy of the arts, a democracy that insisted on adherence to a common goal. Who, he asks, could summon up, "the chorus that had given birth to drama, in which all the arts and the Greek

earth and sea and sky and even the whole nation worked together for their common glorification?"[50] Convinced that art, architecture, and drama had originally served a common religious purpose that bound them closely together, Semper focused on the creation of the Greek temple as the key to understanding Greek art in general.

Although Semper saw the tradition of building temples as part of the disciplined, law oriented, heritage of the Dorians, that tradition only attained perfection by imbibing the free Ionic spirit. Many different arts came together to create the temple, and artistic greatness depended on the nature of the relationship of the parts to the whole. According to Semper, the perfected Greek temple, "became possible only because all the arts made their sacrifice and endured the limitations within which they would be completely free to develop their means without harming the whole."[51] As in Semper's earlier reference to the "free and circumscribed working together" of the arts,[52] this idea of the arts sacrificing and enduring limitations to become completely free echoes the central assumption of the German idea of freedom, that true freedom could only be achieved under the discipline of some higher law or purpose. That higher purpose emerged from uniquely Greek religious beliefs that had little in common with those of the neighboring Asian and African civilizations whose art and architecture had influenced the early Greeks.

To explain how the achievement of a Doric–Ionic synthesis provided the basis for an expression of those higher beliefs Semper turned to a detailed consideration of "the Greek temple in its general context." In addition to the temple proper (the Doric element) there was also a temple district, called the sanctuary, "a wide, elongated, and rectangular platform raised on a powerful stone substructure more or less high and frequently towering over its surroundings by its choice of position." Semper believed the sanctuary derived from Ionic-Asian sources. This platform supported a smaller enclosure that over time developed an elaborate entrance "with columns and pediments, called a propylaeum." The entrance into the enclosure led to the temple, which originally had been quite simple. But to balance the impressive entrance and court, the temple was transformed by giving it "a peristyle that supported the roof of the temple." This brought the exterior of the temple into an impressive harmony with its surroundings, but to provide an equally impressive setting for the image of the deity within the temple required a corresponding transformation of the interior "into a peristylar

courtyard," providing an appropriate setting for the climax of the architectural and religious experience. The walls of the courtyard "were enlivened by the noblest works of sculpture, toreutics, and painting. The highest expectations aroused by everything that went before was fulfilled by the sight of the majestic image of the deity shimmering in gold."[53] In a gradual historical development, the basic Doric structure of the temple eventually became engulfed by Ionic *Bekleidung*.

Even with the increasingly powerful influence of *Bekleidung*, however, Semper saw the ultimate result as a true synthesis. The elevated position of the temple district perpetuated the Ionic, Asian tradition of worshiping the deity on mountain tops and the inspiring effect was "intensified by the fact that in many cases the citadel, the market, the theater, the hospital, and so on were brought into the area protected by the deity, where they and their surroundings formed the peribolus of the temple."[54] Still, the Doric temple remained at the center of the religious sanctuary, emphasizing the principle of discipline to a higher authority. Under the aegis of this authority the various arts that united to create the temple and its district avoided Asiatic excess and license to achieve true freedom and artistic genius.

Semper noted one further architectural development of the temple district that testified to the free, democratic spirit of the Greeks. Even with the transformation of the exterior and interior appearance of the temple to accommodate its embellished surroundings, he felt that there was still a "sharp break at the climax of an intensifying effect,"[55] which led the Athenians to place their colossal statue of Athena in the middle of the Acropolis where her helmet rose above the top of the Parthenon. For Semper, the movement of the deity from the temple out into the surrounding temple district had profound meaning for freedom and democracy: "Clever priests no longer held the deity in a cage hidden away; no longer did he serve despotic arrogance high in the clouds as a powerful and menacing symbol." This symbolized the emergence in fifth-century Athens of the distinctive religious conception that inspired what Semper regarded as the greatest achievements of Greek art. The higher divine power that the various arts combined to honor, "served no one, was a purpose unto himself, a representative of his own perfection and of Greek humanity deified in him. Only a free people sustained by a national feeling could understand and create such works."[56] A deified form of Greek humanism, glorifying the perfection of human nature within

the close community of the city state provided the inspiring principle of Greek religion that inspired the free unification of the arts.

In addition to the belief that real freedom in art could be achieved only where each particular art bound itself to some higher purpose within a "total" work of art, a second aspect of the idea of freedom—what might be called its transcendent or spiritual dimension—also emerges in Semper's writings about ancient Greek architecture. Here too, Semper's thought reflects the German idea of freedom as it came to be translated into the sphere of culture. For Goethe, the hierarchical relationships of German society implied a concept of freedom that he reformulated into a general cultural principle. He argued that, we become free "by honoring something that is above us. For when we honor it we raise ourselves up to it." This idea became an important theme in *Faust Two*, where Faust and the various feudal lords honor Helen in her role as the Queen of Doric Sparta and more broadly as a representative of classical form and discipline.[57] The idea of a spiritualizing freedom inherent in the Doric–Ionic synthesis of Greek architecture reinforces the allusion to *Faust Two* that Semper includes in *Der Stil*.

In considering how this spiritualizing freedom emerged from the originally Asiatic practices of *Bekleidung*, Semper argues that this imported tradition inspired little artistic originality at first. It produced a "confused, lawless [*ungesetzlicher*] mixture" of ornamentation that only gradually developed into what Semper called, with a nod to Richard Wagner, "the 'artwork of the future'['*Kunstwerk der Zukunft*']."[58] How, he asked, did the "*Bekleidungs* principle, which in barbarian architectural style…maintained such an important and thoroughly realistic significance"; contribute to the new art of the great age, and "what became of it after the achievement of that splendid metamorphosis from which the new Greek art came forth?"[59] Returning to the example of the Greek temple, Semper argues that, when brought together with the Doric principles inherited from Egypt, in the evolution of the fully developed temple, the Asiatic principle of incrustation or *Bekleidung*, is "by this combination freed [*befreit*] from its material service and only acts as the bearer of the formal thought, and by concealing the stone joints and the building material in general, it, to a certain degree emancipates it, so that only the form and the organic idea lodged within it speaks forth in and of itself." On a more technical level Semper explained that "it is simply a matter of transforming the mechanical, utility-based

construction techniques of Asiatic *Bekleidung* into dynamic, indeed into organic, forms in order to spiritualize [*beseelen*] them."[60] This process eliminated anything inconsistent with the pure formal idea of the structure.

This process of sifting through what had been inherited, and "the spiritualization [*Vergeistigung*] of it,"[61] constituted the new genesis of Greek architecture, according to Semper. Stressing its organic quality, he pointed to its avoidance of unnecessary indications of weight and inertia in favor of using these characteristics of mass only "in order to emphasize suggestively the activity and life of the organic parts. In short, the emancipation of form from the physical and from bare necessity is the tendency of the new style." Semper then returned to the subject of his first work on Greek architecture, polychrome decoration, to argue that this spiritualization of the physical culminated in the use of color on these buildings. "With this tendency the Greek principle of construction had to claim for itself, and cultivate, color above all, as the most subtle, most incorporeal *Bekleidung*. It is the most perfect means of doing away with reality, for it is itself immaterial, even while it clothes the material; also it expresses in other respects the freer tendencies of Hellenic art."[62]

In Semper's theory, this spiritualizing aspect of freedom served to elevate the central values of Greek culture expressed in its architecture. The artistic triumph achieved in the Parthenon revealed the highest ideals of Periclean Athens, the beliefs in freedom, in community, and in humanism. Semper observed that, "in the Greek temple, the unity of purpose stands out in the pure harmony of fullest richness and greatest freedom, in a way that is analogous to the way it does in man."[63] This unity of purpose appeared in the temple's form and the nature of the deity worshiped there, in the free synthesis of the arts that produced the temple, and in the liberating use of color to dematerialize its physical substance and allow the most spiritualized apprehension of its central idea.

III

By the time Semper published *Der Stil* he had achieved widespread recognition as one of Europe's leading theater architects, and in this, his major theoretical work, he paid close attention to the role of theater in fostering the creative genius of the ancient Greeks. Semper saw in the development of ancient Greek theater a close parallel to the way

color and *Bekleidung* were used to spiritualize or dematerialize reality in the Greek temple, and the historical, theoretical, observations in *Der Stil* offer valuable insight into Semper's architectural achievements as the designer of theaters in Dresden and Vienna, and as a major contributor to the design of Richard Wagner's Bayreuth theater. Semper traced back the origins of both temple and theater architecture to the primitive need of a people to commemorate important events or religious experiences in festive celebrations. These colorful events, were centered around a "*festival apparatus, the improvised stage* [*Gerüst*] bedecked and provided with all the accessories and pageantry which particularly mark the occasion of the celebration, and enhance its glorification, draped with carpets, decorated with boughs and flowers, ornamented with festoons, wreaths, fluttering ribbons and trophies."[64] The Egyptian temple, from which the Doric derived, arose in this way "wherever a local god, for whom no solid temple had yet been built, acquired a particular reputation for working miracles."[65] Semper believed that the first theaters developed from the same source. "In this way the highly characteristic, architectural style of theater originated in historical times from the boarded but richly ornamented and dressed [*bekleideten*] performance stage."[66] The theater and the temple arose from a common source that Semper associated with a basic human impulse to create.

Semper went on to explore the psychology of the artistic experience in an extended aside that later attracted Nietzsche's interest.[67] Semper declared, "I believe that *Bekleidung* and masking are as old as human civilization, and that the joy in both is identical to the joy in the activity that makes people sculptors, painters, architects, poets, musicians, dramatists, in short artists."[68] The festival that gave rise to both the theater and the temple created a certain psychological state that was essential to art: "Every artistic creation on the one hand, every artistic enjoyment on the other, presupposes a certain Mardi Gras mood; in more modern language, the haze of carnival candles is the true atmosphere of art. Abrogation of reality, of the physical, is necessary if the form as meaningful symbol, as autonomous human creation, is to emerge."[69] It was essential that artists ensure that the means used to achieve the desired artistic effect be forgotten, and Semper saw the effort to mask reality as essential to the most primitive as well as the most advanced art. At the height of a people's artistic development, however, when the various arts became closely interrelated, there was also an effort to "mask the substance of the mask."

Semper used the term mask [*Maske*] in two interrelated ways. Usually he meant the use of dressing [*Bekleidung*] to disguise the nature of the material used in an artwork, but in a more specialized sense he sometimes used it to mean a dramatic performance or masque that also disguised the nature of reality. Whether it involved sculptural works such as those of Phidias, which dramatized the myths of the gods, or dramatic works that drew on the other arts to produce their effect, this double process of masking intensified the capacity of art to liberate the viewer from material reality.[70]

Semper's concept of masking drew together drama, sculpture, and architecture as part of a historical process in which drama shared with the plastic arts an increasing capacity to dematerialize reality in the service of timeless spiritual values. Semper found evidence of this development in yet another of the arts, ceramics: "The oldest vase paintings give us a conception of the early, material, masques of the Hellenes."[71] At a later historical period, he continued, "the ancient masque is again taken up in a more spiritual way, like the stone dramas of Phidias, by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides as well as by Aristophanes and the other comic dramatists." At this high point of Greek culture, its drama presented a human history that had never actually occurred, but nonetheless remained everywhere and always true to the human heart. Semper argued that the spirit of the masque and the carnival was still present in Shakespeare's plays and in Mozart's operas, "for music also needs this means of abrogating reality."[72] The idea of freedom, in the sense of spiritual freedom from the material and physical, was inherent in all the arts.

Semper applied his theories about the origins and nature of theater in the ancient world directly to his practical work as a theater architect, particularly in his long association with Richard Wagner. The two men met in Dresden, where Semper had gone in 1834 to accept a position as professor of architecture at the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts, and where Wagner became musical director in 1843. A shared political radicalism, which reinforced their developing friendship, led them to join the revolutionary wave of 1848–49 when it reached Dresden in May of 1849. Both men actively participated in the insurrection, and as a result both lost their positions and were forced to go into exile when the revolution failed. After initially going in different directions, they reconnected in 1855, when, partly as a result of Wagner's influence, Semper secured a teaching position in Zürich, where Wagner had settled. During the following decade the two men

began to consider designing a theater specifically intended for the performance of Wagner's musical dramas.

In late 1864, when the newly crowned King of Bavaria, Ludwig II, decided to pursue his fascination with Wagner's work by having a theater, tailored to Wagner's needs, constructed in Munich, the moment for realizing their project seemed at hand. The prominence Semper had enjoyed as a theater architect, from the time he completed his widely praised Dresden Opera in 1841, made him an obvious choice for the job. Wagner recommended his old friend to the king, and within a year Semper began drawing up detailed plans.[73] The various controversies surrounding the King, the composer, and the architect (whose revolutionary politics provided powerful ammunition to his opponents) eventually sank the project, but Semper's innovative plan to design a theater for Wagner's revolutionary "artwork of the future" based on the underlying principles of ancient Greek architecture, had an afterlife in later theater projects that were brought to completion.

Wagner's plan for a completely new kind of theater emerged in connection with his work on *The Ring of the Nibelungs*, and he mentioned it specifically in an 1862 preface to the poetic text of the *Ring*. After pointing out the inadequacies of the existing opera houses for his artistic purposes, Wagner emphasized his need for a "simple" theater with a design based "only on the artistic utility of the interior." Referring to Semper, without mentioning him by name, Wagner observed that "to this end I had drawn an experienced, gifted architect into discussion of a design with an amphitheatre for the public and the great advantage of an orchestra that had been rendered invisible."[74] A few years earlier, Semper had drawn up plans for an "ancient" theater intended for construction in the Crystal Palace, near London, and when this project failed to be commissioned, he drew on these plans in his preliminary work for Wagner's theater (figure 2.5).[75]

The theater design that Wagner and Semper developed together made a fundamental break with tradition. The arrangement of the seats, in the form of a modified amphitheater, abandoned the socially stratified, horseshoe-shaped hierarchy of loges, characteristic of mid-nineteenth-century theaters, for an intrinsically democratic seating arrangement in which all the spectators enjoyed essentially the same view of the stage. Semper maintained, in a report on the design, that in laying out the auditorium "in the ancient style" he did not imitate the amphitheaters of ancient Greece out of "antiquarian partiality,"[76] but because of specific artistic requirements; his letters, however,

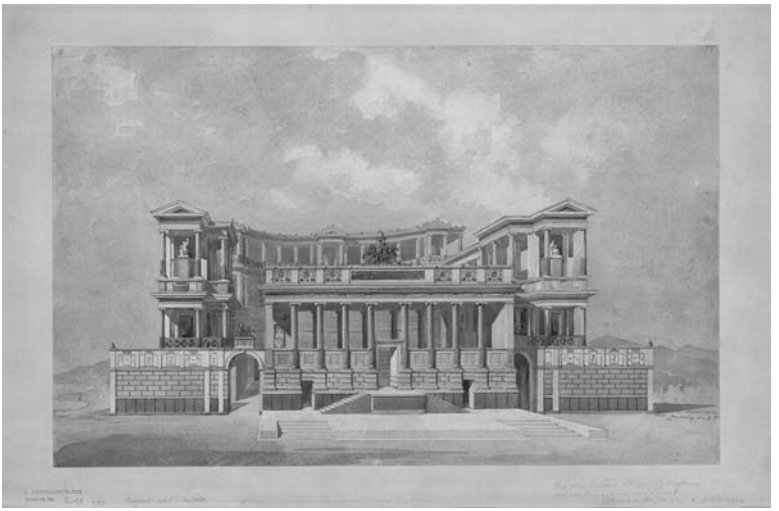


Figure 2.5 Semper's design for a Crystal Palace at Sydenham, near London. Image provided by Instituts für Geschichte und Theorie der Architektur an der Eidgenössischen Technischen Hochschule, Zurich.

show that he was willing to bend those requirement at times in order to retain the semicircular seating arrangement.[77] His report emphasized the well-known acoustical properties of the amphitheater, and the visual advantages for stagecraft of a seating arrangement in which the various special effects would have the same impact from every point of view.[78]

The influence of Semper's theories about ancient Greek art and theater appears not only in the amphitheatric seating arrangement of his plan, but also in the way his architectural design drew on the principle of "masking" at work in Greek architecture of the great age. Wagner's key artistic requirement of a "complete separation of the ideal world of the stage from the world of reality represented in the auditorium," required "an orchestra that was not visible and was only perceived by the ear."[79] Semper developed an ingenious way to use a double proscenium to meet this requirement. He proposed placing the orchestra in a small amphitheater below the level of the auditorium, hidden by a semicircular wall just high enough to block the view of the audience. At each of its ends, this wall would provide the base for a larger, outer proscenium, within which, at a sufficient

distance to allow room for the orchestra, a smaller inner proscenium would mark the edge of the actual stage area. This would allow the orchestra to be heard, but not seen, and the darkened area between the two proscenia would obscure the actual boundary between the open orchestral area and the floor of the stage.

Wagner reacted enthusiastically to Semper's plan. He later recalled how the need to conceal the orchestra had "inspired the genius of the famous architect" to come up with his design. The apparently empty space (from the viewpoint of the audience) between the inner proscenium and the outer proscenium's semicircular wall, which marked the beginning of the seating area, performed a vital function. "We called it the 'mystical chasm,' because it served to separate reality from ideality."[80] A further advantage of the two proscenia involved the potential for creating an optical illusion of perspective that furthered the artistic purposes of Wagner's work. Semper's design, as illustrated in the model he constructed for the Munich theater,[81] flanked the smaller, inner proscenium with decorative panels exactly like the panels flanking the outer proscenium, but on a slightly smaller scale, so that, with the area between the two proscenia in relative darkness and the boundaries of the stage unclear, the inner proscenium would appear to be at a greater distance than it actually was.[82] Operating under this illusion of distance, the audience would then see the actors as larger than they were, giving them an "enlarged, superhuman form" that fitted the heroic character appropriate to Wagner's work.[83] As Semper observed, "In this way, one achieves something similar to what the Greek tragedians strove for, in that the actors to whom they entrusted their heroic roles were enlarged beyond human dimensions by using masks, buskins and other means."[84] In the design for Wagner's theater, the specific architectural solutions that Semper devised to hide the orchestra and create a clear separation between the ideal world of the stage and the real world of the audience all exemplified the ancient Greek practice of concealing the material and means by which art achieved its effect. To meet the needs of Wagner's artwork of the future, Semper gave modern form to the ancient principle of masking that had enabled the arts of ancient Greece to free the spectator from the bonds of reality and reveal a higher ideal world.

Although the project to build the Munich theater collapsed in 1868, when King Ludwig finally withdrew his support, Semper soon found a use for the innovative concepts he had developed for it. Not

long after the abandonment of the Munich project, a fire destroyed the Dresden opera theater that Semper had designed as a young man, and in response to widespread demand, he received the commission for a theater to replace it. Semper's plans for his second Dresden theater made use of various elements of the Munich project, including the central concept of hiding the orchestra in a lowered area behind a semi-circular wall between the audience and the stage. In a letter to Nietzsche, Cosima Wagner reported somewhat ruefully that Semper's new theater would incorporate the plan for a "mystical space" originally intended for "our festival house," although she was quick to add that it was good that the idea would not be lost.[85] Moreover, when Wagner subsequently revived the idea of building his own festival house—in Bayreuth rather than Munich—Semper's Munich design shaped many of the key elements of the interior design, including a seating arrangement in the shape of a rising amphitheater; the double proscenium, and the "mystical chasm" to make the orchestra invisible.

The Bayreuth theater, which was designed by Otto Brückwald without Semper's direct involvement, used none of the expensive materials or the rich decorative program Semper had proposed for Munich, but when it was completed, Wagner could still say in a letter to Semper that "Even if it is crude and tasteless, the theater has been constructed according to your design."[86] Wagner saw the theater as a provisional structure that would eventually be rebuilt in more polished and elegant form; the important thing for him was to have an interior design that allowed him to present his musical dramas in the way he intended. Despite his disappointment over the demise of the Munich project, Semper accepted this outcome with good grace and attended the first performances at Bayreuth. He also agreed to Cosima's request that he design a medal to commemorate the important occasion.[87]

IV

In developing his plans for the Munich theater, Semper had proposed to situate it near the royal residence at the end of a newly constructed avenue, in an elaborate setting of gardens and terraces, with a grand stairway leading down to the nearby Isar river. The magnificent setting reflected Semper's long-held belief that such important public structures should be part of carefully planned urban spaces

that would emphasize their integration into the overall cultural and political life of the city. He believed the Athenian Agora and the Roman Forum exemplified this sort of integration, and over the course of his life as a practicing architect he had attempted, with little success, to convince those who commissioned his public buildings to accept them as part of a larger design that would provide the equivalent of such spaces for the modern city. At the beginning of his career he had advanced a project that would have made his first Dresden Opera part of a huge forum stretching out toward the Elbe from the side of the Zwinger, a complex of eighteenth-century buildings, framing a large courtyard, which served as an outdoor theater. This plan came to nothing, and by the time Semper designed his second Dresden Opera, further construction had eliminated the possibility of creating such a forum. Semper put forward his forum concept in other unrealized projects, including the one for the Munich theater, where it added to the controversy and projected expense that eventually defeated the project; but in the last decade of his life, he did finally have success in putting into practice this basic element of his thinking about architecture and city planning. An invitation to participate in the massive *Ringstrassen* building program in Vienna allowed Semper, to a greater extent than ever before, to participate in a forum project that allowed him to express some of his most important ideas about the nature and origin of artistic creativity and its relationship to society and politics.

Initially, the Viennese consulted Semper only as an outside expert to help choose the design for two new museums to be built as part of a new "imperial forum," but his strong criticism of both the designs selected for the final choice led to an ever deeper involvement, which resulted in Semper himself being chosen as the principal architect of the entire project. The proposed *Kaiserforum* involved a plan to create a large forum extending from the imperial palace across the *Ringstrassen* to the area beyond, with two massive buildings extending out from the palace and two more, an art museum and a natural history museum, continuing the boundaries of the forum in the area outside the *Ring*. Although the concept of such an imperial forum predated Semper's involvement in the project, his plan determined its final shape. He played the primary role in designing the layout and the external appearance of the various buildings enclosing the forum. In his work on the *Kunsthistorishes* museum and the *Burgtheater,* which his plan would have attached to the forum buildings, he realized

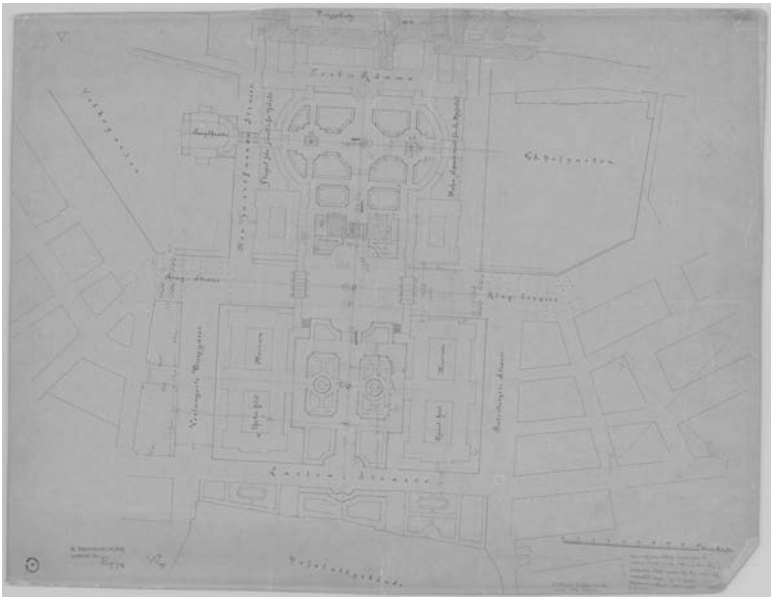


Figure 2.6 Semper's plan for the Kaiserforum. Image provided by Instituts für Geschichte und Theorie der Architektur an der Eidgenössischen Technischen Hochschule, Zurich.

much of his decorative program before he withdrew from the project not long before his death (figure 2.6).

The Austrian Emperor himself played a significant part in choosing Semper to design the *Kaiserforum*. When initially consulted about the project, Semper had objected that neither of the final proposals accomplished the essential purpose of making the museums part of an architectural concept centered on the planned expansion of the imperial residence. On learning of Semper's critique, Franz Joseph invited him to Vienna to discuss the project, and, after several meetings with the Emperor, Semper was asked to draw up a plan for the *Kaiserforum* as a whole. When this plan evoked a favorable response, Semper took on the project as principal architect working in collaboration with Karl Hasenauer, the Viennese architect responsible for one of the two final proposals Semper had criticized.

It seems ironic that a convinced republican and former revolutionary such as Semper would owe the chance to realize his most ambitious

architectural project to the favorable opinion of the Austrian Emperor. Given Semper's political outlook and his belief that architecture had an important relationship to the political values of its time, it seems even more ironic that, when Austrian liberalism had just gained an opportunity to express its political values in other buildings that were part of the *Ringstrassen* building program, he would set about designing an imperial forum for Vienna that aroused the opposition of some of the most prominent liberal city planners. Nonetheless, the historical and political assumptions of Semper's aesthetic theory gave him a strong rationale for creating an urban space modeled on the imperial forum of the Roman Empire, rather than on a "democratic" space such as the Athenian agora.

Semper spelled out these assumptions in a lecture he delivered in Zürich in March 1869, shortly before his visit to Vienna to discuss the forum project with the Emperor. The lecture, *On Architectural Styles*, leaves no doubt that Semper remained a fervent apostle of freedom—political and artistic freedom, as well as individual freedom of will. The great architectural monuments of past civilizations, he declared, were not the result of "blind natural processes," they were "the free creations of man, on which he employed his understanding, observation of nature, genius, will, knowledge, and power." Although natural and societal forces were important, Semper argued that "the free will of the creative human spirit is the first and most important factor in the question of the origin of architectural styles, although, of course, man's creative power is confined by certain higher laws of tradition, demand, and necessity. Yet man appropriated these laws and made them subservient, as it were, to his free, objective interpretation and exploitation."[88]

The lecture also reaffirmed Semper's long-standing admiration for the unique accomplishments of the ancient Greeks. In his historical overview of artistic styles he affirmed that the "free Greek people" first created the possibility of "free arts."[89] But with the subsequent historical expansion of the political horizon from the city-state to the universal empires of Alexander the Great and the Romans, so too did architecture expand its capacity for monumental expression. "A few centuries after Alexander, the Romans assumed his legacy and borrowed from him that mighty art of space creation, which would have related to Greek architecture as a symphonic concert does to a hymn accompanied by a lyre—were it as perfect as the symphony and had it (emancipated from abject servitude to need, the state, and religion)

moved, like the symphony, toward a free, self-sufficient idealism." Expressing his hopes, Semper added, "Herein lies its future and the future of architecture in general."[90] Just as the symphony emerged from musical forms that reflected the aristocratic organization of eighteenth-century society, and developed into a much more popular, middle-class art form over the course of the nineteenth century, so Semper seemed to believe that the architectural forms of imperial Rome—despite their association with political despotism—could provide a similar basis for a genuinely modern architecture. Conceding that art critics disliked "the architectural style of imperial Rome," Semper nonetheless reasserted his own conviction that "it contains, as I said, the cosmopolitan future of architecture." He attempted to justify this expectation by defining what he saw as its potentially progressive nature. "It represents the synthesis of two seemingly contradictory cultural forces: namely, striving toward individuality and merging into the collective."[91] In architecture, this meant that "in Roman buildings many individual spaces of various size and importance are arranged around a large central space, following the principle of coordination and subordination, whereby all parts brace and support each other. Each individual element is necessary for the whole, yet without sacrificing its individuality."[92] The same principle governed the interrelationships of the buildings in the forum Semper proposed for Vienna. His critique of the two final proposals for the Vienna project stressed their failure to subordinate the design for the museums to the larger plan involving the expansion of the imperial residence, and this point seems to have made a strong impression on the Emperor.

For Semper, architectural forms always reflected societal organization, so his comments on the architectural relationship between the individual and the whole can also be read as applying to politics and society. The conception of freedom Semper had articulated from his earliest writings on, assumed that the fullest expression of freedom came from just this sort of relationship in which the discipline of adhering to some higher principle of the whole brought about the greatest freedom and perfection of the individual—whether that involved the relationship of the various arts to some unified purpose or the political relationship of the individual to the community. For Vienna, the capital of a multinational empire, the cosmopolitan example of Imperial Rome and the political ideal of a close relationship of the parts to the whole, could find appropriate expression in an

imperial forum as the centerpiece of the *Ringstrasse* building program. Semper confessed to feeling uncomfortable dining with the Emperor and being lodged in the imperial palace, but a progressive Emperor who seemed to understand and support Semper's concept of modern urban planning must have kindled hopes for a future in which politics and architecture would move together toward the "free self-sufficient idealism" he envisioned in his lecture.

Moreover, Franz Joseph, the emperor with whom Semper dined, seemed, during the period from the late 1860s into the 1870s, to offer support to the process of political liberalization, and as Carl Schorske has observed, liberals increasingly turned to him "as the guarantor of their new-won social and cultural power."[93] In the bitterly contested process of selecting a plan for the museum area, Semper's forum project was opposed by influential liberal ministers who favored proposals for a museum complex in the form of an enclosed square, facing the *Ringstrasse*, and, thus, independent of the palace area. Semper's outlook made the unrestricted autonomy of such a museum complex as unpalatable as was the unrestrained individualism espoused by the militant liberalism of the *Bürgerministerium*. This more western European brand of liberalism had displaced an older Josephinist liberal tradition with which Semper had more in common, in that it also stressed a balance between the individual and the social whole. So Semper's forum project, with its goal of achieving an architectural balance of the individual parts to the whole, was fully consonant with his political outlook.

Of the various buildings Semper designed for the forum project, the *Kunsthistorisches* museum allowed him the fullest opportunity for a final expression in architecture of the aesthetic theories developed over a lifetime. Over time, Semper's relationship with Karl Hasenauer grew ever more difficult as Hasenauer used his Viennese connections and his familiarity with the bureaucracy to expand his role in the collaboration, and Semper often found himself outmaneuvered in attempting to realize his ideas. As a result, Hasenauer's influence became increasingly important in determining the basic designs and decorative programs of the various buildings, until finally Semper felt himself forced to withdraw from the project. But in the case of the *Kunsthistorisches* museum, the part of the project to which Semper first turned his attention, he gained the acceptance and execution of his program for its external decoration in virtually unaltered form. The function of the building, as a museum devoted to the history

of art, provided the ideal framework for Semper to use his expertise in *Bekleidung* to translate his convictions about the nature and origin of artistic creativity into visual form as the decorative "dress" of the museum, so that its exterior appearance initiated the educational process the visitor would pursue within. In this unique statement of his aesthetic philosophy, the iconography of the building's decorative program gave enduring public expression to his ideas about the determining influence of artistic materials, the integral relationship of art and society, and the importance of freedom in the creative process.

Semper developed the rationale for his decorative program in a detailed outline submitted to the building committee in the summer of 1874. Believing that the museum facade should reflect the organizing principles of its collections—arrangement by historical period and style—he grouped the determining elements of artistic style into three categories, the material, the cultural–historical, and the personal—by which he meant the individual personality of the artist. He proposed to represent each of these three components of the creative process on three different levels of the facade, the material on the lowest level, the cultural–historical above that—at the level where the principal collections were housed—and the individual at the top, where a row of statues depicting great artists would stand on the balustrade of the roof. With this concept determining the vertical dimension of his iconographic program, the horizontal dimension traced the historical development of different styles, beginning with the most ancient period at the north end of the east facade and proceeding south, west, and north around the building to the modern period on the north facade, appropriately near the *Ringstrasse*. This resulted in the advantageous placement of the Renaissance period, always seen as a highpoint of artistic development, at the front of the museum, on the east facade facing the natural history museum (figure 2.7).

Within the conceptual grid established by these vertical and horizontal parameters, Semper laid out a detailed plan for the statues, reliefs, medallions, and other decorative details chosen to realize his intentions. For example, at the lower, "material," level of the east facade, figures of classical nature spirits such as Oreades, Dryades, and Najades "would allude to the animation and vitalization of the physical by poetry and art," while the techniques and tools of art production such as turning and metal working, would be represented

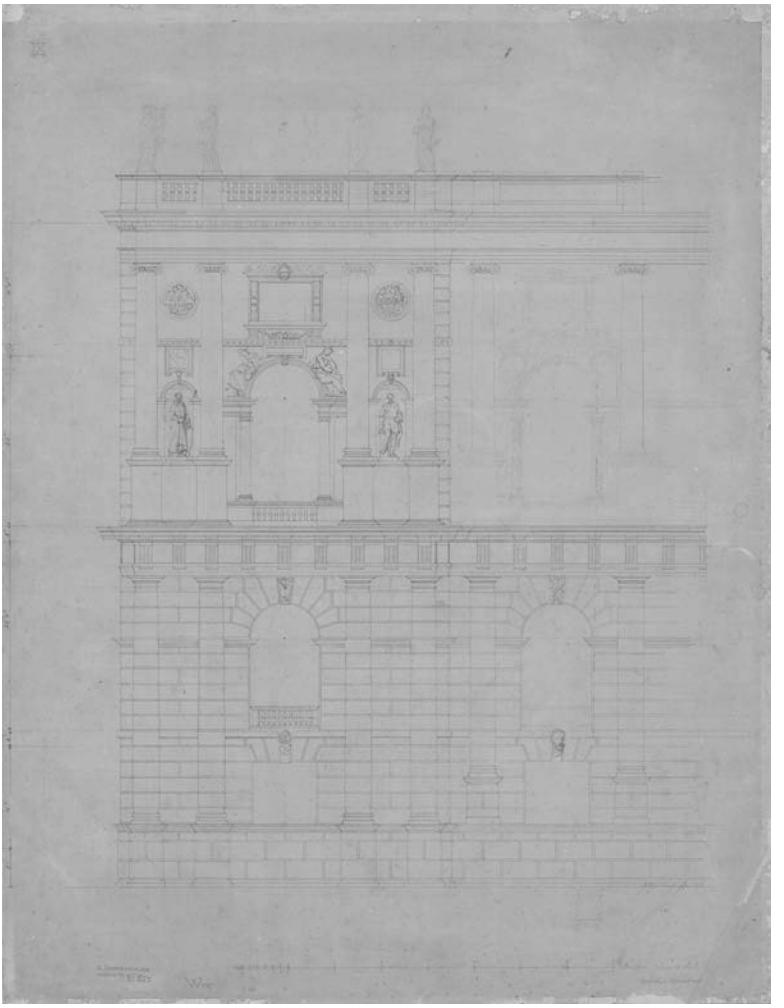


Figure 2.7 Detailed drawing of the facade, Kunsthistorisches Museum. Image provided by Instituts für Geschichte und Theorie der Architektur an der Eidgenössischen Technischen Hochschule, Zurich.

by emblems depicting their mythical or historical discoverers at their work. Above the ground level, on the floor where the museum would exhibit those masterpieces of painting and engraving, which Semper described as "brilliant reflections of the social, political and religious

conditions of their countries and times," the exterior facade would display "representations of the social, political, and art-patronage influences on ancient art," with statues of political leaders such as Pericles and Alexander the Great, as well as reliefs showing great cultural centers such as Athens and Rome. However, to balance these emblems representing the social and political influences on artistic development, Semper provided for others, which emphasized his belief that art also powerfully influenced society and culture. A series of medallions would depict mythical figures associated with "the civilizing power of the arts."[94]

The careful balance Semper's decorative program established between art as a product of historical conditions and art as a civilizing force that could influence historical development, reflected the attempted reconciliation of necessity and freedom in his aesthetic philosophy as a whole. In the decorative program for the *Kunsthistorisches*, he represented this reconciliation in two different ways. The first involved the relationship of the cultural–historical level of the facade to the highest level, where groups of free standing statues on the balustrade of the roof represented the great artists of the western tradition. As Georg Kugler has observed, the "allegorical allusions to culture and the historical dependence of human beings are matched by the free standing statues of artists on the balustrade, symbolizing the free will and spirit of the individual, who makes use of the determinateness [*Gesetzlichkeit*] of the time."[95]

The second means by which Semper represented this synthesis of freedom and necessity, so characteristic of the German idea of freedom, involved another theme running through his decorative program as an organizing principle independent of the horizontal and vertical dimensions of history and style. This theme focused on an enduring dualism in the history of art, manifested most recently in the opposition between classical and romantic art. Semper championed the idea of moving beyond this dualism toward a synthesis of these opposing artistic styles, and in his decorative program for the *Kunsthistorisches* he suggested this idea by pairing representatives of the two tendencies in his groupings of emblems and statues for the balustrade and the façade. On the balustrade, the Doric—rightly represented in its stiff severity—was to be contrasted with the unrestrained drapery of the Ionic era.[96] By highlighting the Greek struggle to achieve freedom of motion and to perfect artistic renderings of draped bodies, the museum's sculptures would demonstrate to its

visitors the ways in which Periclean Greece, having learned to combine Doric discipline and Ionic freedom, had achieved true freedom.

The theme of surmounting cultural dualism to achieve freedom and artistic greatness also appeared in an element of the *Kunsthistorishes* decorative program that provides an appropriate symbol for the way this great architectural project of his final years offered Semper the opportunity to express in stone the ideas and inspirations that had guided his work over an entire lifetime. Above the main entrance to the museum he proposed to have two sculptural groups, one of Eros and Psyche to stand for "the spiritualization of the senses through art" and the other of Faust and Helen to represent "the marriage of classical education and formal beauty with romantic spiritual striving."[97] The first group expressed the possibility that historical development could be shaped by the educational and uplifting power of art, and the second pointed to the desired outcome of that shaping process. In the marriage of Helen and Faust, Goethe's *Faust Part Two* had provided the world of nineteenth-century German culture with the quintessential emblem to represent the synthesis of the classical and romantic traditions, and this union prepared the way for the birth of poetic genius, as symbolized by Euphorion, and the subsequent achievement of true freedom on the part of Faust.

With this final tribute to Goethe, Semper could express in visual language the central elements of his aesthetic philosophy, and honor, in his last great architectural project the artist whose words he had quoted on the title page of his first publication. The radical architect had delivered the Austrian emperor a fully modern—and richly *German*—temple of art, one that married form and *Bekleidung*, and his own creative freedom with the needs of the already-existing city. Semper believed Greece's greatness lay in its combination of freedom and discipline, in the subordination of individual creativity to the higher principle of the whole. Like Goethe, and like his friend Richard Wagner, Gottfried Semper had come to embrace what they believed to be a synthetic, higher form of aesthetic education as the foundation for, rather than the outcome of, the achievement of human freedom.

3

From Political Freedom to Self-Denial: Wagner's *Ring* and the Revolutions of 1848

In 1843, Richard Wagner found himself, for the first time in his life, in a secure professional position, having been appointed *Hofkapellmeister* (royal orchestra director) of Saxony, following the successful premiere of his opera *Rienzi* in Dresden the year before. During the decade that followed, he began work on what many regard as his greatest composition, *The Ring of the Nibelungs*, but despite the prospect of stability and recognition held out by his appointment, the decade proved to be a period of dramatic upheaval and change in the composer's life. The turmoil he experienced owed much to the nature of the times and much as well to the revolutionary role Wagner conceived for himself as a prominent artist. In Wagner's eyes, his appointment came with a commission to reorganize the musical life of the city, "to help Dresden liberate itself musically"[1] from philistinism. Wagner found support for this reform mission in the friendship he formed with Gottfried Semper in the mid-1840s, when both men played leading roles in Dresden's rich artistic life. Like Semper, Wagner became interested in ancient Greek culture as a model for artistic and political reform, and Semper's theories about the origins of Greek creativity helped guide Wagner's growing interest in the subject. Sharing Semper's belief that art was intimately tied to the social and political conditions of its time, Wagner became increasingly convinced that artistic reform required fundamental changes in society and government.

When the revolutions of 1848–49 swept across Germany, Wagner's sympathies were with the revolutionaries. Taking part actively in the agitation, Wagner spoke out forcefully for the ideals of political freedom and social reform, while turning his attention to the new artistic project that would express these ideals. Ultimately, his four-part

musical drama, *The Ring of the Nibelungs*, emerged from this work, but by the time that happened Wagner's whole orientation to the world of politics had changed. Frustrated by the defeat of the revolutions, and forced into exile as a result of his involvement, Wagner turned to aesthetic theory, and from 1849 to 1853 produced a series of important books and essays that drew on his new understanding of ancient Greek culture and his disappointment with modern sociopolitical reality to elaborate a revolutionary concept of musical drama. Denied a politics of the future, he projected an artwork of the future in which he fundamentally redefined the ideal of freedom that had motivated his earlier political hopes. In the altered political and intellectual context of the post-1848 world, the otherworldly elements of the German idea of freedom emerged to take on new importance in his thought. His hope for a politically engaged freedom based on the autonomous individual was displaced by a faith in redemptive freedom transcending the self in love. This changing conception of freedom became a central theme of the *Ring*.

I

Wagner's Dresden years were a time of active intellectual engagement and exploration. Not long after the composer took up his official position, he became part of a circle of artists and intellectuals that met every Monday to discuss their work and exchange ideas. It was in this group that Wagner came into contact with Gottfried Semper, and initially their relationship was antagonistic. Semper, a strong opponent of the medieval revival, then in fashion as an architectural style, distrusted Wagner's interest in medieval German myth. In his autobiography, Wagner recalled a heated discussion in which Semper told him that "he had no interest at all in hearing about the troubadours and the pilgrimage-eager Middle Ages as an artistic subject, and he gave me to understand that because of my use of such material he frankly despised me."[2] But Wagner gradually began to win him over: "Very laboriously, I succeeded in showing him finally, that my studies and inclinations really ended with German antiquity and the discovery of the ideal element of primal German myth."[3] Once Wagner managed to distance himself from the political conservatism so often associated with the medieval revival, the parallel between his own interest in ancient German myth and culture and Semper's similar approach to classical Greek culture became apparent. As Wagner put

it, "As soon as we got to paganism and I revealed my enthusiasm for the heroic saga proper, he became a completely different person."[4] From that time on their shared interests drew the two men together in an increasingly close friendship.

Wagner did not easily tolerate having to sue for another's friendship. By the mid-1840s, however, Semper had established himself not only as a great architect, with his innovative design for the Dresden opera house and his ambitious plan for the Zwinger forum, but also as a prominent aesthetic theorist, with his work on polychromy and the unity of the arts in ancient Greek culture. Seeking a comparative perspective that would allow him to exploit the creative potential of Germanic myth and saga, Wagner wanted to explore the obvious parallel with ancient Greece, and he found in Semper a uniquely qualified intellectual guide, a creative artist of the first rank, who was also a recognized authority on the origins of ancient Greek creativity.

Semper's political views also provided an important point of contact with Wagner, since both men shared a strong commitment to freedom and democratic reform, and both also looked to the freedom and democracy of ancient Greek culture to find a political and artistic model for their own time. In his 1849 essay *Art and Revolution*, Wagner described the close integration of art and politics in the daily life of the Greeks. He envisioned a Greek citizen attending the great dramatic performances that served as civic festivals, expressing the unity of the city state. "Ever jealous of his own great personal independence, ruthlessly opposing the tyrants…who might attempt to control his bold free will, always tirelessly on guard to ward off external influences, not allowing even the honored traditions of the past power over his free present day life, actions and thoughts," nonetheless, the Greek citizen silently submitted to the world of ordered necessity that he became part of when he entered the ancient amphitheater and participated in the dramatic festivals as a member of the audience.[5] Wagner believed that this synthesis of individual freedom and loyalty to the civic community accounted for the greatness of Greek art and culture.

In the years between the formation of his friendship with Semper and the outbreak of the 1848–49 revolutions, Wagner plunged into an intensive study of the art and culture of ancient Greece. It was this period of study that laid the intellectual foundations for the bold new conception of musical drama that Wagner went on to describe in his books and essays, and then realized artistically in the *Ring*.

Although the significance of this intellectual debt to Semper has been lost sight of in recent scholarship, Carl Glasenapp, Wagner's friend and early biographer, emphasizes its importance. He writes that "Wagner read with enthusiastic sympathy his epoch-making work on the polychromy of the ancients—at once a complete program of the author's artistic and even political views."[6] Wagner's prose writings of the 1849–53 period show that he made use of a broad range of Semper's ideas about ancient Greece. He fully accepted Semper's argument that the great works of ancient Greek sculpture and architecture had been brightly painted. To Wagner, the color represented that warm and vital dimension of Greek life that previous scholars had overlooked in favor of an overly abstract and intellectual conception of the Greeks. They had been misled by architectural remains that had been "robbed of all living colored decoration" and were actually "the last, ghostly bleached, death-abstraction of a once, warmly feeling, beauty-oriented life."[7] Arguing that modern art had been constructed out of these abstract concepts, Wagner shaped his mission to reform the arts around the principle of reviving the lost dimension of feeling that had contributed so much to the genius of ancient Greek art.

Wagner also echoed Semper's call for a restoration of the original unity of the arts that had existed in ancient Greece. As Glasenapp observes, Wagner's "later, sympathetically appreciative rendering of Semper's basic reform program . . . bears clear witness to his familiarity with the thought of his old Dresden friend."[8] Semper had postulated an early phase of Greek artistic development when sculpture, painting, and architecture had all shared in the common purpose of expressing the highest ideals of the Greek people, and Semper believed that it was the architect who had led the way in this common enterprise. He was the *choragus*, the leader of the chorus who coordinated the various artistic activities. Wagner's prose writings of this period show that he adopted this idea as his own and extended it from the plastic arts into the sphere of music and drama, where it contributed to his theory of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Wagner's letter of May 8, 1851, to Franz Liszt, shows how closely he followed Semper's conception in formulating his own. Referring to the fragmented and lifeless quality of the modern plastic arts, Wagner expressed the hope that artists would realize that "they must unite these fragments into a whole, and that prescribing the law for this whole would have to be left to the architect, from whose binding guardianship they now proceed to

withdraw with such conceited pride."[9] The close relationship of this point to Wagner's emerging concept of musical drama is evident in the analogy Wagner draws in referring to the architect as "the real poet of the plastic arts, with whom the sculptor and painter must come into contact as the composer and actor must with the actual poet."[10] Wagner argued that in a truly integrated musical drama, the music and acting should follow the lead of the poetry.

In developing his conception of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, Wagner drew on many sources. Artists who associated themselves with the German Romantic tradition often held up the ideal of a unity of the arts, and the Hegelian philosophy that once interested Wagner saw the unity of the arts as an expression of a common historical spirit of the time. But what Wagner gained from Semper was something much more specific and useful. Semper provided a detailed historical account of how, in ancient Greek culture, the plastic arts had emerged together with a common aim that was directly tied to the religious purposes of both temples and theaters. Wagner easily drew the analogy to the sphere of music, dance, and drama where he assumed that a similar unity had existed, and like Semper he hoped to restore the lost unity through a reform of modern art.

In his *Artwork of the Future* (1850) he wrote, "We look to the magnificent culture of the Greeks in order to learn from their inner understanding how the artwork of the future must be created."[11] The three arts most important to ancient Greek drama were dance, music, and poetry, and Wagner described them as three sisters doing a round dance. Out of their loving interaction and their tender kisses emerged the greatness and freedom of this art. "This is free art. The sweet and strongly driven impetus in that round dance of the sisters is the impetus to freedom; the loving kiss of their embraces is the bliss of freedom attained."[12] In the artwork he envisioned that Wagner hoped to bring together the plastic artist, the dancer, the actor, the composer, and the poet to create a unity of the arts that would appeal to all of the human senses in an integrated whole. "In that way, each, from that point of view where its capacities ended, could give way to another which had that capacity, so that each preserved itself pure, free and independent."[13] Wagner believed that this would lead to the fullest possible expression of each of the arts "not *one* richly developed capability of the individual arts will remain unused in the unified art work [*Gesamtkunstwerk*] of the future."[14] With each of the arts striving to fulfill its greatest expressive potential and inspiring the

others to attain the same high goal, a new age of artistic greatness would be possible.

The idea of freedom Wagner associated with his concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a freedom involving the relationship of the parts to a larger whole—whether free citizens in relation to a free community or free arts bound together in a free unity of the arts—appeared frequently in the prose essays that put forth his theories on the nature of art and the relationship between art and society. But Wagner wrote all these essays after the failure of the Dresden uprising, a failure that had an almost immediate impact on his ideas about freedom, so they do not necessarily convey what freedom meant for him before this event occurred. Since the earliest stage of his work on the *Ring* did precede the Dresden uprising, this material does provide important evidence for this issue, but an even clearer beginning point in the evolution of Wagner's ideas about freedom can be found in his 1840 opera, *Rienzi*. The great popularity of this work, which was first performed in the Dresden opera house designed by Semper, had helped Wagner secure his appointment as *Hofkapellmeister*, and that popularity certainly owed much to the opera's strong affirmation of political freedom, in opposition to tyranny. In the relatively liberal kingdom of Saxony, the message had powerful resonance.

Set in Rome during the fourteenth century, the story centers on Rienzi, a Papal notary who challenges the power of the nobility and champions a more equitable political order. The opera even recalls the freedom of the ancient world by means of a pantomime and dance segment. The pantomime takes the audience back to the beginning of the Roman republic when the overthrown Tarquin kings attempted to return as tyrants; it depicts the success of the citizens in fighting off this new threat of tyranny.[15] Although other characters in the opera echo Rienzi's calls for freedom and support his initially successful cause, he dominates the action from beginning to end. For Rienzi, freedom and law are inextricably bound together. He declares, "Let the freedom of Rome be the law; let every Roman be its subject . . . So swear to protect the law; swear the holy oath of free Romans."[16] Rienzi also insists that all will be equally subject to the law.[17] The idea of a universal law, self-imposed by the individual, constitutes the basic definition of freedom based on autonomy; Rienzi both exemplifies and advocates this ideal. In the pre-1848 period, Wagner strongly supported this politically oriented conception of the autonomous individual whose freedom promised to transform the world.

In 1847, when Wagner devoted himself most intensely to the studies of ancient Greek culture that subsequently proved so important to his work on the *Ring*, he looked for parallels between Greek mythology and the myths and sagas of the early Germans. In focusing his Nibelung story on Siegfried, he hoped to give him a role in German culture similar to that played by Apollo in ancient Greek culture. In *Art and Revolution* (1849), Wagner writes, "As it revealed itself in the golden age of state and art, the Greek spirit—after it . . . had placed the *beautiful and strong free individual* at the pinnacle of its religious consciousness—found its characteristic expression in Apollo, the real head and national god of the Hellenic race."[18] Apollo was the god of light, and in the *Oresteia* his opponents are the furies, daughters of the night. In an 1848 essay on the Nibelung myth, Wagner observed that in its oldest form, "we can recognize *Siegfried* as the god of light or sun,"[19] and he went on to compare him explicitly with Apollo. Describing how the sun god "defeated and killed the turbulent and chaotic primal night," he argued that "this is the original meaning of *Siegfried's battle with the dragon*, a battle like that in which Apollo struggled against the dragon Python."[20] In *Götterdämmerung*, Wagner closely associates Siegfried with light and sun imagery.

Wagner's Greek readings brought him into contact with a wide range of materials, including history, drama, and philosophy, but it was the work of the great tragedian Aeschylus that truly captured his imagination, particularly the three plays of his *Oresteia* and *Prometheus Bound*. He read Aeschylus in a translation by the Prussian classicist Johann Gustav Droysen, with accompanying commentaries (the *Didaskalien*) that he found particularly useful in bringing the dramas to life. In his autobiography he writes that "Droysen's Didaskalien helped me to bring forth in my imagination the intoxicating image of the Athenian tragic performances so clearly that I could feel the *Oresteia* . . . affect me with a previously unprecedented penetrating force."[21] He went on to add that, "My ideas about the significance of drama, and more particularly of theater were decisively shaped by these impressions."[22] Aeschylus had a profound influence on Wagner's theoretical essays on drama and theater, and also on the *Ring*.

The fact that the *Ring* eventually took the form of a tetralogy reflects one of the most fundamental structural influences. Although usually referred to as a trilogy, the *Oresteia* and the other ancient Greek tragedies, were actually written as tetralogies, which included three

tragedies and one comic satyr play—though none of these have survived. Since Wagner started his Nibelung project with the declared intention of writing a single play, to be called *Siegfried's Tod*, the expansion of the work has often been attributed simply to his need to include much more background material in a dramatically viable form, but this surface rationale cannot obscure Wagner's underlying wish to give his story the form, the weight, and the significance of the dramatic festivals of ancient Athens. Both the idea of the *Ring* as a *Festspiel* [festival play] and the four-part structure of the work reflect the decisive influence of Aeschylus to which Wagner refers.

In the commentaries Wagner found so helpful to his understanding of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, Droysen devotes great attention to the political context and meaning of the work. In a section titled "Aeschylus' Political Position," he devotes 18 pages to a highly sympathetic history of Athenian freedom and democracy, leading up to and including the particular political situation that concerned Aeschylus. Droysen expresses his belief that the great historical accomplishment of Athens "is having achieved and put into practice the consciousness of freedom."[23] Focusing on the struggle between freedom and tyranny, he places Aeschylus and his family unambiguously on the side of freedom. He then goes on to argue that Aeschylus wrote the *Oresteia* to express opposition to political changes that seemed to open the way to a new tyranny.

The theme of freedom versus tyranny does certainly provide an important frame of reference for the action of the *Oresteia*. Toward the end of *Agamemnon*, Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus seize control of the city in an action Aeschylus presents as an attempt at tyranny. One member of the chorus observes, "Anyone can see it, by these first steps they have taken, they purpose to be tyrants here upon our city."[24] Another declares, "Death is a softer thing by far than tyranny."[25] In the second play of the trilogy, *The Libation Bearers*, the chorus sees a struggle for freedom in Orestes' attempt to avenge his father's death by killing his mother and Aegisthus. They declare, "Our man will kindle a flame and light of liberty [*ἐλευθερία*—freedom].[26] After killing Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, Orestes declares, "Behold the twin tyrannies of our land, these two who killed my father."[27] Although Orestes is deeply troubled by what he has done, the chorus seeks to reassure him, saying, "You liberated [*ἐλευθερώσασ*—freed] all the Argive city when you lopped the heads of these two snakes."[28] By reemphasizing the political issues raised at the end of

Agamemnon, *The Libation Bearers* prepares the way for these issues to assume a more central position in the final play. *The Eumenides* deals with the way the blood vendetta yields to the city state's need for a more regular and orderly way of administering justice. Aeschylus depicts the establishment by the goddess Pallas Athena of Athens' first democratic jury, the counsel of the Areopagus, chosen to decide the question of Orestes's guilt or innocence. The interpretation of the play that Wagner found in Droysen's commentaries emphasizes Aeschylus's political motivation in depicting this highly mythologized heroic moment in the history of Athenian democracy. Droysen believed that Aeschylus was protesting the political move that had just stripped the counsel of the Areopagus of most of its power, a move that seemed to ease the way for Pericles to assume the role of tyrant. Within Droysen's interpretive framework, then, the *Oresteia* as a whole took on the same advocacy for freedom in its struggle with tyranny that Wagner himself had undertaken in *Rienzi*. Reading Droysen's translations and commentaries on the *Oresteia* in 1847, the year before revolutions would sweep across Europe in the name of freedom, Wagner found this an inspiring theme.

The importance of Aeschylus's influence on Wagner's *Ring* has been well established. In his list of Wagner's literary sources for the *Ring*, Rudolph Sabor puts Aeschylus first, well ahead of the *Nibelungenlied*, and this influence extended into some of the most fundamental innovations Wagner introduced into the *Ring*. Modern drama, for example, had no equivalent to the vital role played by the chorus in ancient drama. In the *Oresteia*, only the chorus, by virtue of its mediating position between the action on stage and the audience, could make the various observations needed to establish fully the political framework of freedom versus tyranny. Wagner found a musical way to fill this missing role in modern drama. As Sabor observes, "The Greek chorus comments, reflects and forecasts: in the *Ring* this role is taken over by the orchestral web of leitmotifs."[29] Only after his reading of Aeschylus did Wagner develop a comprehensive theory governing his use of leitmotifs. He called them "melodic moments" of feeling and he conceived of them as "feeling guides [*Gefühlswegweisern*] through the labyrinthine structure of the drama."[30] He envisioned them as "a unified artistic form that stretches not just over smaller parts of the drama but over the entire drama itself as a binding continuity."[31] Wagner first fully realized this conception in the *Ring*, and it gives this work an entirely new sound. As Michael Ewans observes, "The

principal reason why the *Ring* sounds radically different from Wagner's earlier operas is this new purpose to which the orchestra is applied. It envelops the characters . . . in a seamless web of sound."[32] With this fundamentally important orchestral innovation, Wagner could employ his system of leitmotifs to accomplish such essential functions of the ancient Greek chorus as establishing and commenting on important political issues.

In addition to the *Oresteia*, Wagner also drew attention in his writings to another ancient Greek drama, *Prometheus Bound*, and this work had a particularly powerful impact on the subject matter of the *Ring*. In describing it as "the most profound [*tiefsinnigste*] of all tragedies"[33] Wagner paraphrased Droysen, who began his discussion of the play by claiming that it was "the most profound [*tiefsinnigste*] work of Aeschylus and perhaps of Greek poetry."[34] In addition to providing a translation of the play, Droysen also attempted a thematic reconstruction of the two missing parts of the trilogy. This reconstruction and his commentary on the meaning of the trilogy as a whole reveal far-reaching similarities to the *Ring*. Droysen writes that the Prometheus saga begins in "the twilight of becoming [*die Dämmrung des Werdens*]" when various races live on the earth.[35] A weak and primitive human race coexists with a divine race of giants, the Titans, who rise up against their father, Cronus, only to be subjected in turn by Zeus and a new race of gods. Prometheus, one of the Titans, had been endowed with supernatural wisdom by his mother (whom Droysen identifies as *Erde*), allowing him to foresee the defeat of the Titans, and use his wisdom to help Zeus achieve victory. By aiding Zeus, Prometheus brings an end to the chaos of the contending elementary forces and helps introduce a new ethical world order. That new world order, however, has no place for humanity, which Zeus decides to destroy, seeing it as a threat to his control. Prometheus argues against his decision and, using his ability to foresee the future, persuades Zeus that one day a human will help preserve his rule. Having rescued the human race from destruction, Prometheus incurs Zeus's wrath by then helping it rise from its lowly state, giving it not just fire but the various blessings of knowledge and civilization. In punishment, Zeus then has Prometheus chained to a rock where an eagle comes periodically to feed on his liver.[36]

The one surviving play, *Prometheus Bound*, depicts Zeus as a cruel and ruthless tyrant and Prometheus as a heroic fallen god, who has sacrificed his freedom to help humanity. In telling his story to the

chorus Prometheus describes the help he gave Zeus, and declares, "These were the services I rendered to this tyrant and these pains the payment he has given me in requital."[37] Prometheus remains defiant throughout the play. Toward the end, when Hermes appears as a messenger of Zeus, Prometheus scornfully tells him, "Be sure of this: when I set my misfortune against your slavery, I would not change."[38]

In the final part of the trilogy, *Prometheus Freed*, from which some fragments survive, Droysen projects a reconciliation between Zeus and Prometheus. This reconciliation forms an integral part of the trilogy's meaning as a whole. According to Droysen, "Prometheus is the archetype of the human spirit," and both his defiance and his reconciliation represent stages in the process through which the human spirit expands and grows. Human freedom provides the key to this process. However eternal and divine the human spirit might be as a race, that changes "when race dissolves into individuals . . . when the blind selflessness of natural life is ruined by a determined concentration on self-interest and consciousness." The capacity for freedom put humanity in opposition both to dead materiality and Zeus's new world order, and through the exercise of this freedom humanity could rise to a new level of existence. Prometheus helps the human race because he believes that "through its own strength the human spirit should again regain the world that was lost to it." Freedom invested humanity with great strength and great obligations; it gave the capacity to change the world and the obligation to reconcile the human spirit with the ordered existence of the world. According to Droysen, the myth of Prometheus, conveys this idea. "The only reason for his punishment is his love for the race of mortals; his offense is his freedom and his strength; against them the son of Cronus [Zeus] turns his anger, destroying everything individual, wanting to force everything to the level of his ethical world." Summarizing Zeus's punishment of Prometheus, Droysen concludes, "So freedom is bound in chains by the very powers to which it gave control." Then, after the passage of thousands of years a resolution is achieved by the hero Hercules. In the age of heroes the opposition between Zeus and Prometheus, between order and freedom, ends in a reconciliation that points to a future shaped by heroic humanity.[39]

Many similarities connect the *Ring* to the Prometheus trilogy as reconstructed by Droysen. Both focus on a rebel within the divine order who sacrifices everything to help humanity. Both rebels, Prometheus and Brünnhilde, help humanity with the supernatural

wisdom given to them by their earth goddess mothers. Both suffer similar punishment for their defiance, being imprisoned on a rock until they are freed by a heroic mortal. Although Brünnhilde does not suffer Prometheus's fate of having an eagle come to feed on her, she does say, at one point in *Götterdämmerung*, "An eagle has come to tear me apart."[40] There can be little doubt that Wagner modeled the figure of Brünnhilde on Prometheus.[41] Further connections can be found in a wealth of details, but by far the most important link involves the idea of freedom, which was central to both works. In both, a free humanity is juxtaposed to the ordered necessity of the gods, and in both a free hero provides the solution to the dilemma faced by the supreme god as a result of his own tyrannical actions.[42] The Greek spirit of freedom that Wagner found in this work, and in other Greek texts that he read in 1847, provided powerful reinforcement to his already strong belief that freedom would provide the foundation for a reformed political order and truly great art. The *Ring* grew out of his attempt to express that belief in a work of art unlike anything created before.

II

It took Wagner more than a quarter century to create *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. He made his first prose sketch of the drama in 1848, and by the time he finished the music in 1874, his beliefs and the political conditions in which he lived had undergone dramatic changes. These changes required Wagner to rethink the project repeatedly, but even so, much of the original conception and story line survived to find expression in the finished work. The 1848 prose sketch thus provides a useful baseline for understanding where Wagner began in the evolution of his ideas about freedom and in his treatment of the other important themes of the *Ring*. Knowing which themes persisted from the beginning to the end of the project, which ones underwent significant alterations of emphasis or meaning, and which ones were newly introduced, provides evidence for exploring how Wagner's changing conception of the work may reflect the reshaping influence of political events and pressures.

The way Wagner treats the issues of power and justice that dominate the beginning of the *Ring* reveals both continuity and change from the prose sketch to the finished work. In the prose sketch, Wagner describes a primal world inhabited by four contending races:

the Nibelungs, who dwell within the earth; the giants, who—like the Greek titans—possess great strength and a defiant spirit; the gods, who have secured mastery of the world for their leader, Wotan; and finally the human race, which the gods want to cultivate and protect. Having achieved supreme power, Wotan contracts with the giants to build the gods a fortress from which they can rule the world. Wagner specifies that the gods rule the world through "wise laws"[43] and that the "aim of their higher world order is moral consciousness,"[44] but Wotan's contract with the giants produces a tragic dilemma. As payment for their labors, the giants demand a horde of gold accumulated by the Nibelungs for the benefit of their master, Alberich, as opposed to the finished work where they demand and are promised Freia, the goddess of love. The gods make this payment by capturing Alberich and robbing him of his treasure, including the magic ring he had used to enslave the Nibelungs. This theft undermines the gods' "moral consciousness" and violates the "wise laws" through which they govern the world. Robbed of his treasure, Alberich curses the ring and all those who will come to possess it, and this curse destroys the hope for any just world order. Since Wotan cannot correct the injustice without creating another (by depriving the giants of their rightful possession), he cannot escape the dilemma he has created.

In the prose sketch, freedom enjoys a prominence equal to that of power, and it serves as a counterweight to unjust power. This theme remains important in the finished work, but it undergoes changes of meaning and emphasis. In the prose sketch, freedom has the philosophical meaning of free will as well as the political meaning of a remedy for the enslavement of oppressed people, and these two aspects of freedom are connected. When the giants gain possession of the ring, they fail to use it—simply including it in the horde guarded by a dragon—but even so the Nibelungs, including Alberich, continue to be enslaved to it. As Wagner writes, "the soul, the freedom [*Freiheit*], of the Nibelungs lies useless, buried under the bulk of the lazy dragon."[45]

The only solution to the god's dilemma and the injustice of slavery lies in the capacity for free will dormant in the human race. "Only a free will autonomous of the gods themselves and capable of taking on their guilt and atoning for it, can break the magic spell."[46] The gods, therefore, encourage the human race to become strong enough to throw off their protection and do of their own free will what their intelligence dictates. Ironically, in achieving their purpose, the gods

would undermine their existence by fostering a "freedom of human consciousness which made them give up their own direct influence."[47] When the human race fails to achieve this goal, Wotan intervenes. He brings about the birth of the twins, Siegmund and Sieglinde, but unlike the story in the finished work he is not their father. Although Sieglinde marries Hunding, the twins nonetheless couple and conceive the child to be named Siegfried, who will grow up to become the "free hero." When Hunding attacks Siegmund for violating the bond of marriage, Wotan allows him to be killed, despite the opposition of his daughter, Brünnhilde. Wotan then punishes her for her disobedience by banishing her to a rock and imprisoning her in a magic sleep.

The birth of Siegfried and the banishment of Brünnhilde prepare the way for their story. The prose sketch, however, says nothing about the love theme that plays so important a role in the finished work. Nor does it refer to love in connection with Siegmund and Sieglinde. After Siegfried grows up, slays the dragon and gains possession of the ring, he goes in pursuit of Brünnhilde, awakens her and uses the ring to marry her, but Wagner says nothing of love. In return for the ring, Brünnhilde gives Siegfried all her superhuman wisdom, but as Wagner observes, he "does not use it."[48]

The prose sketch provides greater detail and some dialogue for the last part of the story, the part originally titled *Siegfried's Tod* that eventually became *Götterdämmerung*, and it differs fundamentally from the finished work, particularly in the emphasis given in the sketch to the idea of freedom. Up to the conclusion, however, the basic story lines of the sketch and the finished drama differ only slightly. After leaving Brünnhilde, Siegfried encounters the Gibichungs: Gunther, his sister, Gutrune, and their half-brother, Hagen, the son of Alberich. Incited by Alberich, Hagen plots to regain the ring, and using a magic potion causes Siegfried to forget Brünnhilde so that he can marry Gutrune. Gunther agrees to the marriage on the condition that Siegfried will win Brünnhilde for him, and after Siegfried does this, Hagen kills him. When Siegfried dies, the outrage Brünnhilde first felt at her betrayal fades as the wisdom she had given him returns to her, and she realizes that, "He had innocently taken on the guilt of the gods; he atoned for their injustice through his defiance, his autonomy [*Selbständigkeit*]."[49] Wagner indicates, however, that his hero may have been too autonomous in his relationship with Brünnhilde. In a passages of dialogue included in the prose sketch, she refers to the

wisdom she gave him, saying, "You did not use it; you relied only on yourself."[50] Brünnhilde's comment indicates that Wagner's aim in developing the theme of freedom and autonomy resembles the idea of a balance between freedom and community he had found in Droysen.

In atoning for the god's injustice, Siegfried brings freedom to the world. Brünnhilde, claiming her right to complete his work, announces that "the servitude of the Nibelungs is undone; the ring will no longer bind them. Alberich will not get it; he will no longer enslave you; but in return he himself is now as free as you."[51] Following this powerful affirmation of freedom, she declares that she will return the ring to the Rhinemaidens, that henceforth only Wotan will rule, and that she will lead Siegfried to an honorable afterlife in Walhalla. She then joins him on his blazing funeral pyre. With its message of freedom for the oppressed, the triumph of Wotan, and the survival of the gods, the conclusion envisioned in the prose sketch differs profoundly from the finished work, where the text does not mention freedom and the gods perish.

The reason why Wagner made such fundamental changes in his plan for the *Ring* has been the subject of intense debate among Wagner scholars, but most agree that his increasing emphasis on love, as a counterweight to power, owes much to the philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach, whose works Wagner began to study soon after he completed the 1848 prose sketch. Feuerbach's materialistic, psychological analysis of religion and his radical political beliefs made him a hero to many of those who supported the revolutions of 1848–49; Wagner's sympathetic response to his ideas echoed that of his fellow revolutionaries. Feuerbach believed that the various elements of religious belief and doctrine were outward projections of the human capacity and need for love, a need which he unhesitatingly affirmed. Wagner enthusiastically adopted this belief in the beneficent agency of human love. In an 1850 essay he wrote, "The mediator . . . between power and freedom, the redeemer without which power remains brutality and freedom, arbitrary choice, is love."[52] The *Ring* incorporates this belief in the mediating role of love. Most analysts of the *Ring* have emphasized the struggle between power and love as its central theme, particularly at the beginning of the work, but the analytical framework suggested by Wagner's observation—power versus freedom with love as a mediator—provides a more adequate basis for understanding the work as a whole.

Das Rheingold, which Wagner intended for a preliminary evening, preceding the performance of the main trilogy on three successive days, describes a world filled with injustice and oppression. The absence of freedom and justice calls out for a solution and prepares the way for the following three dramas to tell the story of Siegfried, the free hero who would rescue the world from its evils. There can be no doubt that Wagner intended *Rheingold* to serve as an allegory for the injustices of his own time; it focuses attention on many of the same social, political, and economic problems that he addressed in his prose works during and after the revolutions of 1848–49.[53] As George Bernard Shaw recognized and explained so clearly in *The Perfect Wagnerite*, *Rheingold* attacks the evils of capitalism and the society that benefits from it. The third scene, where Wotan and Loge descend into the underground home of the Nibelungs, presents a compelling image of a people enslaved to the power of gold. When they encounter Alberich's brother Mime, who has just been beaten for not working hard enough, he describes how the lives of the Nibelungs changed when Alberich gained possession of the all-powerful ring. "Once, as carefree smiths, we made jewelry for our women, beautifully crafted, enviable, Nibelung toys; we laughed joyously at our work." Now they work "without pause or rest to pile up the gold for our master."[54] When Mime asks them who they are, Loge answers, "We are friends of yours; we will free [*befrei'n*] the Nibelung people from their distress."[55] As the god of fire and a trickster god, Loge's words have the character of an empty political slogan. The gods came simply to capture Alberich and steal his ring; any benefit to the Nibelungs would be incidental. The Nibelungs' gold hoard and ring unmistakably symbolize the power of capital and its ability to enslave humanity. Within the mythic framework of the drama the ring represents one of two sources of power and injustice that stand in the way of freedom.

The other source involves the way Wotan exercises the power by which he rules the world. In comparison with the prose sketch, the completed poem of *Rheingold* presents the god in a much less favorable light. In the opening scene of *Rheingold*, for example, both Alberich and Wotan sacrifice love (in Wotan's case, the goddess of love) to their pursuit of power, an important new element of the story that puts Wotan on the same footing as his archenemy. So, even before Wotan commits his tragic mistake of abducting Alberich and stealing the ring, he shows none of the "moral consciousness"

envisioned in the 1848 sketch. Nor does the poetic text mention the "wise laws" referred to in the sketch. Indeed, in *Walküre*, Wotan refers to "those we arrogantly controlled with laws, the men . . . whom we bound to us in blind obedience by the treacherous bonds of murky treaties [*Verträge*]."[56] Literally meaning treaties, contracts, or bargains, the word *Verträge* takes on greatly expanded meaning in the *Ring*. It represents the most important symbol of power in the work, because Wotan governs the world through the treaties engraved on his spear. In the *Ring*, *Verträge* means not just contracts and bargains, but also the laws of society and on some level even the laws of nature. This expanded meaning also makes *Verträge* an instrument of power every bit as much at odds with freedom as Alberich's ring.

In the German idealist tradition, freedom had a close association with law; Kant believed that moral freedom could only come from rational, self-imposed law. But in the expanded sense of the term Wagner employs in the *Ring*, *Verträge* were neither rational nor self-imposed, and they excluded any element of freedom. The way Wotan describes his own relationship with *Verträge* makes this particularly clear. In Act II of *Walküre*, Fricka insists that Wotan must allow his son, Siegmund, to die as punishment for violating the sacred bond of marriage, and despite the love he feels for him, Wotan is forced to agree. Afterward, he complains bitterly to Brünnhilde, declaring, "I am caught in my own chains—I, least free of all."[57] He rules through the law and is bound to enforce it when Fricka insists, but he does not believe at all in this particular law. He makes the same point soon thereafter when he tells Brünnhilde why he cannot undo the tragedy he has set in motion by simply seizing the ring and returning it to its rightful owners, the Rhinemaidens. Doing so would violate his *Vertrag* with the giants, and that would render him powerless. As he explains, "These are the bonds that bind me: I who am master through treaties am a slave to treaties."[58] Even as the all-powerful ruler of the world, Wotan feels deeply frustrated that he lacks true freedom.

Wotan's hope for a solution to his tragic dilemma emerges clearly in *Walküre*, where he begins to take on the stature and gravity absent in *Rheingold*. As he explains to Brünnhilde, only a free hero, completely autonomous of the God could accomplish what he could not. Autonomy constitutes the essence of freedom as Wagner develops this idea in *Walküre* and *Siegfried*. In the intellectual tradition based on the moral philosophy of Kant, true freedom of the will became possible if an individual acted on a basis that excluded any outside influences or

any consideration of personal advantage. If an individual acted solely out of a rational commitment to the good of all humanity, then that action expressed free will or autonomy. So the idea of Wotan actually creating such an autonomous individual involves a contradiction in terms, a contradiction he realizes and expresses. He says, "How could I find him? How could I create the free one?... The free person must create himself. I can only create slaves."[59] In the same conversation with Brünnhilde, Wotan specifies just how fully autonomous the free hero would have to be. He would have to be someone foreign to the God whom he had never helped, who, without his favor or advice acted out of his own need. He would even have to oppose the god.[60] Paradoxically, Wotan's only hope for a resolution to the tragedy he has set in motion lies in a free hero whose exercise of freedom would necessarily destroy the basic fabric of his position as ruler of the world, the web of treaties through which he exercises his power.

III

Understanding how and why Wagner altered the meaning of freedom in the *Ring* requires close attention to the chronology of the work's composition, and the unusual procedure he is following in creating it, adds a complicating factor. Working in reverse order, he wrote the poetic text over the period from 1848 to 1852, and he then composed the music from 1854 to 1874, working forward from *Rheingold* to *Götterdämmerung*. After completing the *Ring* poem toward the end of 1852, Wagner had it published privately early the next year, and although he subsequently made significant changes to the concluding scene of *Götterdämmerung*, the rest of the poem remained largely unchanged in the finished work. Since he composed the music years later—the last third of it (Act III of *Siegfried* and all of *Götterdämmerung*), many years later—Wagner could accommodate his changing beliefs by the way he constructed and employed the web of musical symbols he associated with the text. His extensive and sophisticated use of these motives, or leitmotifs, added an entirely new dimension of meaning to the work. As Sabor observes, the leitmotif "comments on the action, it recalls, it predicts, it even contradicts, occasionally, a character's words or action... Leitmotifs are our accredited guides through the profundities of the Ring."[61] Although the poetic text provides a convenient starting point for exploring the meaning of freedom and its relationship to power and love, a full

understanding of these issues can only be approached by considering how the musical symbols lead beyond the text.

Wagner uses motives associated with three of the principal characters in the *Ring*, Siegfried, Brünnhilde, and Wotan, to develop different aspects of his ideas of freedom. As the clearly designated "free hero," Siegfried has a number of motives—particularly his personal motive and those of his sword and horn call—that can represent the idea of freedom, depending on how they are used. But the idea of freedom also has its own specific motive that has been recognized in recent studies of the *Ring*. To appreciate how Wagner uses it, or any of the other *Ring* motives, one must begin by considering how musical symbols work. All symbols link different levels of meaning. With musical symbols, one level involves the emotions and feeling evoked by a particular configuration of notes that accompanies the poetic text (or some action on stage), and a second level has to do with the idea conveyed by that poetic text or stage action, an idea expressed in shorthand form by the label attached to the motive, such as the Sword motive. For his web of motives to be effective, Wagner knew that his audience would need to hear and retain in memory the associations he established between the musical figures or melodies and the poetic text, so he developed techniques to drive home the associations the first time the motives appeared, such as repeating them or highlighting them in various ways. Wagner also expected that by listening to his works repeatedly, his devotees would catch ever more subtle associations and levels of meaning.

Moreover, even while he was still alive, his disciples began to publish motivic guides to the *Ring*. Wagner himself, however, only rarely gave any indication of what he regarded as appropriate labels for his motives, and since all symbols convey a range of meanings, various analysts over time have given the motives widely different names. For example, the first of these analysts, Hans von Wolzogen, labeled the Freedom motive, *Wanderlust*, love of travel, because that idea does have some relevance to the motive in its first appearance, but his label misses the symbol's center of meaning, which only becomes clear through repeated use. A more modern scholar, Deryck Cooke, labeled it Siegfried's Mission in his brilliant analysis of the *Ring*'s system of motives. Since Cooke emphasizes the importance of freedom in his discussion of the motive, and since Siegfried's mission involved bringing freedom to the world, Cooke's label does work.[62] But freedom lies at the center of the symbol's range of meanings, and

should be primary in its identifying label, as Sabor recognizes by calling it the Freedom motive in his five-volume study. Some scholars have responded to the difficulty of choosing an appropriate label by simply referring to the different motives by number, but this underemphasizes the importance of the motive's ideational content and unbalances the relationship between music and poetic text in the analysis. With all its difficulties, the label provides a needed entry point into the meaning of the motive.

The Freedom motive in its extended form, a descending scale of four notes with a characteristic rhythm, usually repeated just once, sometimes in falling, sometimes in rising sequence, first appears in *Siegfried*, and a passage in the first scene of Act II gives a particularly clear indication of its meaning. It enters in the vocal line when Wotan, in his guise as the Wanderer, answers Alberich's questions about the god's protective relationship with Siegfried. Alberich suggests that Wotan watches over him, and asks if he will interfere to help Siegfried win the hoard of gold from the dragon, Fafner. Wotan replies, "Whom I love, I allow to go his own way. He stands or he falls; he is his own master." Wotan's words clearly describe the autonomous individual who freely makes his own decisions. Wotan sings the words "stands or he falls" to the first four notes of the Freedom motive, and the orchestra then plays the last four notes to the words, "he is his own master" (figure 3.1).

Frequently Wagner uses just the first part of the motive, a single four-note descending scale, to convey the idea of autonomy or

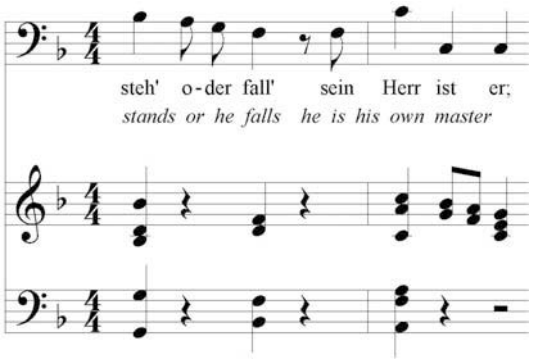



Figure 3.1 *Siegfried*, Act II, Scene 1

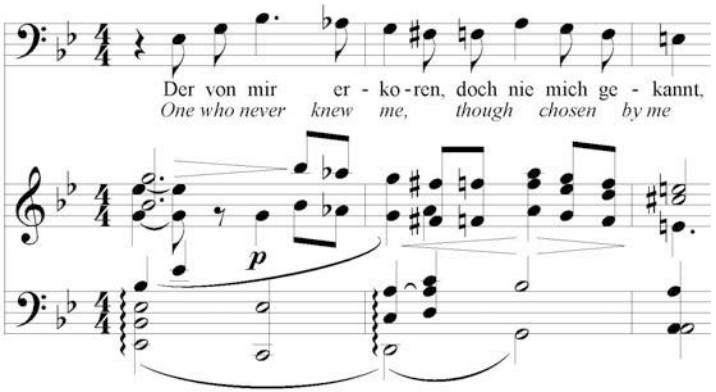



Figure 3.2 *Siegfried*, Act III, Scene 1

freedom. For example, this basic form of the motive accompanies Wotan's declaration to Erda in Siegfried, Act III, scene one, that Siegfried "never knew me" another indication of his autonomy (figure 3.2). Both of these instances recall the passage in the text of *Walküre* where Wotan tells Brünnhilde that the free hero will have to be someone "foreign to the God."[63] (I will usually refer to the brief form of the motive simply as the Freedom motive or as the basic form of the motive and to the extended form as the extended or doubled form of the motive.)

The idea of autonomy also underlies the meaning of the Freedom motive in its first appearances, in Act I, scene one of *Siegfried*, where Wolzogen mistakenly labels it "love of travel."[64] Having come to realize that Mime cannot be his true father, the adolescent Siegfried eagerly gives expression to his dislike of his foster father and his desire to be free of him. When Mime asks him what he intends to do, Siegfried replies with exuberance, saying first that he intends to leave the woods and go out into the world, but then explaining in detail how much he wants to avoid any further contact with Mime. The passage expresses Siegfried's dislike of Mime and his desire to become his own autonomous person rather than a love of travel. Siegfried exclaims, "How glad I am to be free; nothing binds or forces me."[65] The music of the passage moves toward a statement of the Freedom motive in its extended form to the words, "I flee from here; I float away" (figure 3.3). It concludes with a forceful statement of his wish

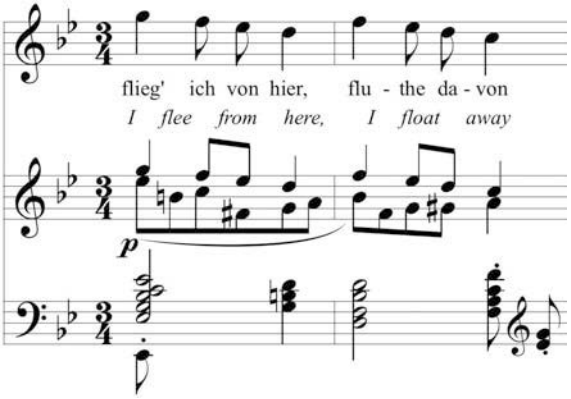



Figure 3.3 *Siegfried*, Act I, Scene 1

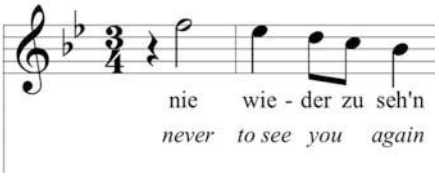



Figure 3.4 *Siegfried*, Act I, Scene 1

"never to see you, Mime, again," sung to the basic form of the motive (figure 3.4).

Siegfried then runs into the forest. As Mime looks after him in astonishment, the orchestra plays the Freedom motive first in its extended form of two descending scales in falling sequence and then a few bars later, in a much extended form of five descending scales in falling sequence. Both the music and the words declare with finality that Siegfried has established his autonomy from Mime and will now exercise his freedom to live his life as he wishes.

Although the character of the adolescent Siegfried serves to define the basic concept of freedom as autonomy, the task of presenting the more complex issues of how freedom relates to power and love falls to Wotan and Brünnhilde. An understanding of freedom's relationship to power must start with a consideration of the Treaty motive, a long, emphatically delivered, descending minor scale, first heard in the second scene of *Das Rheingold*. As with so many of the *Ring*

motives, this one has been given different labels by different analysts. The first, Wolzogen, did call it the Treaty motive, and argued that its powerful downward movement "suggested the decline of the gods' might through the treaty's power to enchain their freedom [*Freiheit*]."[66] Most recent analysts of the *Ring*, beginning with Cooke, have referred to it as the Spear motive, a move that de-emphasizes its political meaning. From a dramatic point of view, a spear presents a more compelling image than a treaty, but in this case Cooke's argument fails to convince. He writes, "The basic motive of the spear has always been labeled the 'Treaty' or 'Bargain' motive, because Wotan's power resides in the treaties sworn on the spear and engraved on it. But these treaties, which are actually the laws whereby Wotan governs the world, are only maintained by his will, and this is what the power of the spear represents."[67] The text of the *Ring* poem, however, clearly shows that the laws are not maintained by Wotan's will, but quite the opposite. In *Rheingold*, the giant Fasolt tells Wotan, "Hold true to treaties. What you are, you are only through treaties."[68] In *Walküre*, when Wotan explains to Brünnhilde why he cannot undo his mistake by seizing control of the ring, he says, "But he with whom I contracted [*vertrug*]—him, I dare not strike; powerless before him, my valor [*Muth*] would fail."[69] These passages show beyond any doubt that the treaties sustain Wotan's will rather than the reverse. Since the treaties are engraved on the spear, the motive certainly does, at times, refer to the spear, but its meaning centers on *Verträge*. In his 1997 volume on *Rheingold*, Sabor returned to Wolzogen's original label, calling it the Treaty motive.[70] As the most basic and important of the motives associated with Wotan, the Treaty motive generates many others that bear on his interaction with other characters in the drama. One that springs directly out of the Treaty motive speaks to the nature of Wotan's all-important relationship with his daughter, Brünnhilde. Cooke labels it Brünnhilde's Reproach, while Sabor calls it Wotan's Child. As one of the Walkyries, Brünnhilde served simply as an extension of Wotan's will, but eventually her powerful capacity for love causes her to break with her father and defy him. The motive expresses both her closeness to her father, and also the break with him by following the first four steps of the Treaty motive's downward scale and then leaping up an octave on the fifth. The new motive makes its first appearance at the beginning of *Walküre* Act III, scene three, when Brünnhilde attempts to justify her actions to Wotan (figure 3.5).

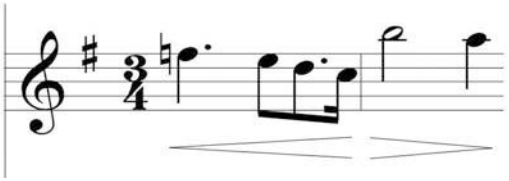



Figure 3.5 *Die Walkure*, Act III, Scene 3

As Cooke points out, when Brünnhilde begins her justification a few bars later "her reproach motive presents the full descending scale of the Spear [Treaty] motive, continually opposed by leaps to the upper octave."[71] In this elegant example of his motivic technique, Wagner indicates that Brünnhilde moves from being totally identified with her father's aims, to a full rejection of his loveless, deterministic world of *Verträge*. Since Brünnhilde herself says she "defied [*trotzt*']" her father, and he describes her action as treason, the stronger descriptive label Brünnhilde's Defiance seems more appropriate for the motive than Brünnhilde's Reproach.

What Wagner conveys so economically in these motivic relationships—Brünnhilde's closeness to her father and subsequent defiance of his command—constitutes the essence of the long speech of justification that follows the first appearance of her motive. As the daughter of Erda, the wisest woman in the world, Brünnhilde has the intelligence to construct a most ingenious explanation for what she has done. The tone of her argument remains deeply respectful of her father, but in its substance she yields nothing. She focuses on Wotan's profound ambiguity about his decision to allow Siegmund to be killed. In making that decision, Wotan had to choose between his love for his son and the demands of his wife Fricka that he enforce the letter of the law. The struggle within him opposed his capacity for love to the system of laws on which his power rested. As he had in *Rheingold*, Wotan chose power over love, but in contrast to *Rheingold* he did so with the greatest reluctance and sadness.

In essence, Brünnhilde argues that in making that decision Wotan betrayed his true self. She tells him that when he yielded to Fricka's demand for enforcement of the law, "you became your own enemy." She refers to his *Zwiespalt*, a word that conveys the notion of being split in two, and then goes on to discuss these two sides of his personality almost as if they were two separate beings. She says that she

knows "one thing, that you loved the Wälsung [Siegmund]" and that this "inner division [*Zwiespalt*] forced you to forget completely this one thing. You were obliged to regard only the other [Fricka and the law]." She points out that in battle it was her duty to watch the rear [*den Rücken*—literally Wotan's back], so when Wotan turned his back on Siegmund she felt it her duty to watch him. And what she perceived: his "sacred distress," the "complete freedom of his love [*freiester Liebe*]," his "mighty defiance," made helping him her only thought.[72]

Brünnhilde's speech moves toward a powerful climax in which she declares—speaking of and to her father, "He who breathed this love into my heart, he whose will allied me with the Wälsung—profoundly close to him [the loving side of Wotan], I defied your command."[73] The musical treatment of the passage offers important insight into the interrelationship of power, freedom, and love. The orchestra accompanies the passage with repeated statements of the motive of Brünnhilde's Defiance—changed from the minor to the major and given a strong feeling of affirmation. Then, at the end of the first phrase of her statement, that motive, played by the oboes and English horns, leads directly into the Freedom motive, which also appears in the vocal line (figure 3.6). With little additional accompaniment, the motive stands out. The conclusion of her statement receives a similar treatment. The orchestra provides repeated statements of the affirmative, major form of Brünnhilde's Defiance, and then, after the words,

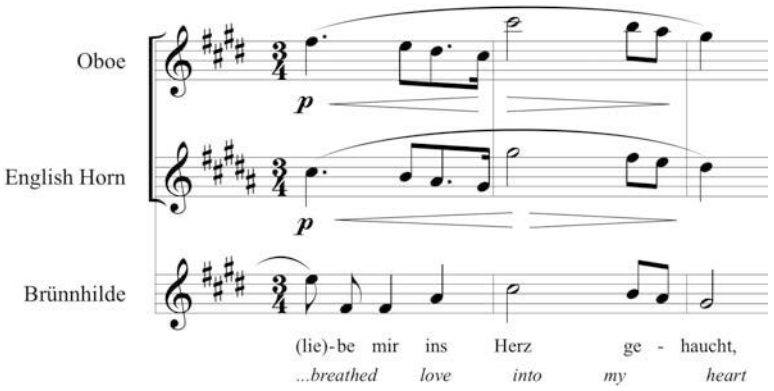



Figure 3.6 *Die Walkure*, Act III, Scene 3

"I defied," Brünnhilde sings the Freedom motive to the words, "your command" (figure 3.7). This time, Wagner emphasizes the importance of the motive by a slight pause preceding these last two words, and by the absence of any orchestral accompaniment. By defying her father's command and separating from him, Brünnhilde has established her own autonomy and freedom.

This passage bears comparison with one earlier in *Walküre* where both the words and the music anticipate this important turning point in the story. In Act II, scene two, Wotan tells Brünnhilde that he will allow Siegmund to die and that she must fight for his foe. She responds with defiance, declaring, "Him, whom you always taught me to love, I will never be forced to oppose…by your doubly cleft [*zwiespältig*] word."[74] Brünnhilde's reference to her father's *zwiespältig* word points forward to the elaborate defense—based on Wotan's *Zwiespalt*—which she will advance in Act III. Furthermore, the music accompanying the conclusion of her response ends with the Freedom motive, just as does the later passage. In this way, Wagner prepares his audience to hear and understand the issues and motives of Act III, scene three, the climactic moment of *Walküre* when Brünnhilde, like Prometheus, confronts the God and suffers punishment for her freedom and her love of humanity.

Wotan reacts with outrage to Brünnhilde's declared intention to follow her feeling of love and defy his command: "How dare you, child?…Who are you but the servile sworn slave of my will?"[75] Wotan's uncompromising words and the unusually powerful statement of the Treaty motive that follows them both express the absolute opposition between any expression of freedom and the deterministic authority of the treaties through which Wotan rules the world.[76] In this passage the three central themes of the Ring, power, freedom, and love, intersect in a way that shows power completely at odds with freedom and immune to the influence of love.

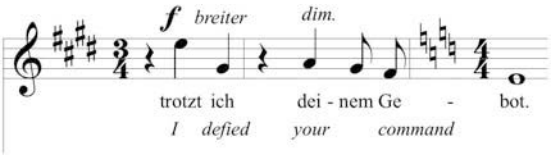



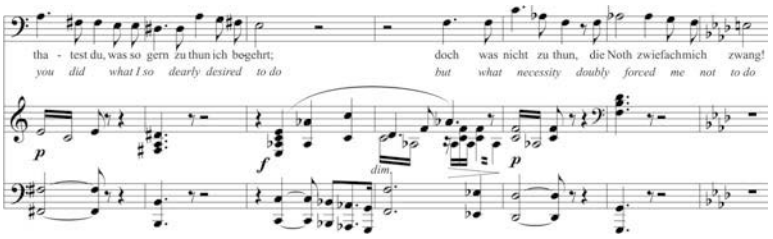
Figure 3.7 *Die Walkure,* Act III, Scene 3

tha - test du, was so gern zu thun ich begehrt;
you did what I so dearly desired to do
doch was nicht zu thun, die Noth zwiefachmich zwang!
but what necessity doubly forced me not to do
p
f
dim.
p

Figure 3.8 *Die Walkure*, Act III, Scene 3

Act III, scene three, focuses on the same themes with a result that differs greatly in emphasis. When Brünnhilde sings, "he who breathed this love into my heart," the motive of Brünnhilde's Defiance—now in the affirmative form that emphasizes the love underlying her defiance—accompanies the word "love," as Brünnhilde explains to her father that his own capacity for love, passed on to her, made her act as she did. She believed that she was acting the part of his better self, his loving self, when she exercised her freedom to defy his command. As Sabor observes, "Brünnhilde's sustained note on the first syllable of *Liebe*... is a moving masterstroke."[77] The music of both the orchestra and the vocal line convey the power of love with a soaring intensity, and this time, in contrast to the situation in Act II, scene two, Wotan responds with more sympathy. He declares, "So you did what I so dearly desired to do, but what necessity doubly forced me not to do." Wotan sings the final words in each of these counterpoised clauses to the Freedom motive, and, as in the previous instance, Wagner makes the repeated motive stand out by providing no orchestral accompaniment (figure 3.8).

In Wotan's response, the music speaks of freedom both times, while the words indicate first that he wants to have that freedom, and then, that necessity does not allow it. In various ways, Wagner emphasizes all four appearances of the Freedom motive at the climax of Brünnhilde's confrontation with Wotan, and in all four, two sung by Brünnhilde and two by Wotan the motive immediately precedes the motive of Brünnhilde's Defiance in the orchestra, which is emphasized each time by a pause in the vocal line. The striking similarity in the treatment of the four instances drives home the symmetry and the contrast between daughter and father. For Brünnhilde, freedom and love are closely bound together and affirmed in opposition to the

world of power. For Wotan the demands of power prevent such an affirmation no matter how ardently he desires it. Brünnhilde's profoundly moving justification of her actions changes the nature of the conflict. The apparently irreconcilable opposition seen in Act II, scene two—father versus daughter, power versus freedom and love—has given way in Act III, scene three, to a conflict within Wotan's soul.

IV

Wotan only resolves his inner struggle after wandering the world in search of the wisdom he so desperately needs to find a way out of the tragedy he has brought on himself and humanity. Having experienced the contending forces of power, freedom, and love within himself in the final scene of *Walküre*, he seeks further understanding through interaction with the various beings inhabiting the world. *Siegfried* tells the story of these travels, which he undertakes in the guise of the Wanderer. The solution he finds reflects Wagner's belief that love should serve as the mediator in the conflict between power and freedom. Impelled by his love for humanity, Wotan finally forsakes the power world of *Verträge* to affirm freedom and act on it.

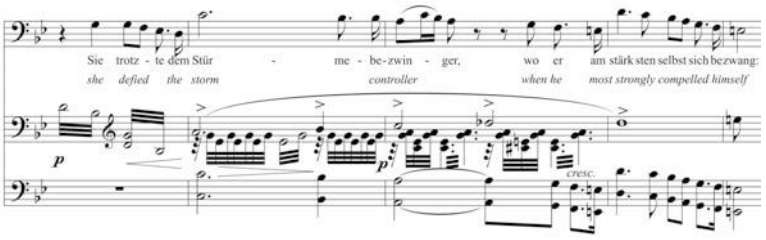
Wotan's moment of resolution comes in Act III, scene one of *Siegfried*, when his journey brings him at last to Erda. The orchestra accompanies his attempts to awaken her with the second segment of the love motive of Freia, the goddess of love. As Cooke points out, "This basic love-motive represents the compassionate aspect of love as opposed to the sensuous aspect which is expressed by the first segment of Freia's motive."[78] So Wotan comes to Erda out of his loving concern for humanity.[79] Erda tells Wotan that he should consult her daughters, the three Norns. The Norns can read Erda's thoughts while she sleeps, and they then weave these thoughts into the web of fate that controls what happens in the world. Wotan rejects this suggestion because, as he says, "The Norns weave under the compulsion [*Zwange*] of the world; nothing can they turn or change."[80] The Norns represent determinism, and Wotan's response shows that he realizes his need for free will to check the momentum of the oncoming tragedy. As he says to Erda, he needs to know "how to arrest a wheel on the roll."[81] She then suggests asking their child Brünnhilde "who is bold and wise."[82] This leads Wotan into a direct confrontation with the goddess.

Sie trotz - te dem Stür - me - be - zwin - ger, wo er am stärk sten selbst sich bezwang:
she defied the storm controller when he most strongly compelled himself
p
p
cresc.

Figure 3.9 *Siegfried*, Act III, Scene 1

As he explains to her the cause of his breach with their daughter, the music speaks as clearly as the words of the inner struggle that brought him to Erda. When he says that Brünnhilde "defied [*trotzte*]" him he sings these words to the motive of Brünnhilde's Defiance, which also appears in the orchestral accompaniment. He then adds that she did this "when he most strongly compelled [*zwang*] himself," referring to his own difficult decision to follow the law rather than love. The motive of Brünnhilde's Defiance accompanies the beginning of this phrase, but when he reaches the words, "strongly compelled himself" he sings them to the very similar Treaty motive that also appears in the orchestra (figure 3.9).

The motives convey the direct conflict between Wotan's desire to affirm love and his compulsion to adhere to the necessity inherent in the system of laws. After further describing his inner struggle, he explains how he punished Brünnhilde's defiance. In referring to her he calls her "die Weihliche," the consecrated one, and he sings these words to the Freedom motive, supported by the oboes, and violins.[83] He explains that her punishment will be "to love a man as his woman [Weib]." The orchestra then follows Wotan's words with a brief version of the Treaty motive, driving home the point that the law will exact its punishment.[84] At this juncture, the situation seems little changed from Act III of *Walküre*. While Wotan remains torn, he continues to uphold the demands of power in opposing the freedom and love represented by the banished Brünnhilde.

Erda reacts to Wotan's speech with slowly building outrage. "He who teaches defiance [*Trotz*] punishes defiance?" she asks. The orchestra accompanies each of the references to defiance with the motive of Brünnhilde's Defiance. She continues, "He who inspires the deed is angry because of the deed?" Again, the orchestra follows

the line with the motive of Brünnhilde's Defiance. Then, building to her powerful conclusion, Erda declares, "He who upholds the laws [Rechte], he who protects oaths, prevents justice [Recht] and rules through perjury." The orchestra accompanies the references to laws and oaths with the motive of Brünnhilde's Defiance.[85] Erda has no sympathy for Wotan's inner struggle and sees it as a betrayal of the principles he purports to defend, a betrayal for which her daughter must pay the price.

Whether moved by Erda or by his own sense of his tragic circumstance, Wotan's conversation with her soon takes a turn that shows he has made a momentous decision. He reinforces his earlier suggestion that the world of necessity does not hold an answer to his dilemma by telling Erda that her deep wisdom (her ability to foretell the future) will dissipate before his will. Since Erda's wisdom provides the source for the web of fate woven by the Norns, this implies the victory of free will over determinism. He then reveals what his will intends. He declares, "The end of the gods does not distress me, because my will desires it." Following these words, the orchestral plays the second segment of the Freia motive heard at the beginning of the scene, where it expresses Wotan's love of humanity. He then goes on to say that what he had earlier decided in despair—to accept the downfall of the gods and the world—he would with "delight and joy now freely bring to pass." These final words are sung to the Freedom motive with the motive beginning on the word "freely [*frei*]." Inspired by his love of humanity, Wotan finally turns away from the necessity inherent in the world of power relationships to embrace freedom for himself and for the future of humanity.[86]

This passage marks one of the most important moments in the *Ring*, possibly the most important with respect to the idea of freedom. Understanding what Wagner meant by freedom at this point requires a close examination of the complex issues raised by the passage. One of those issues involves the similarity of the ideas expressed in the passage to those of Arthur Schopenhauer. Since Wotan's first act of free will—like his earlier decision to leave the world to Alberich's son—carries with it a knowing acceptance of his own destruction, this has sometimes been compared to the philosophy of Schopenhauer, who believed in a denial of the will-to-live. When Wagner's friend Georg Herwegh introduced him to the philosopher's ideas in September 1854, they had an immediate and profound impact.[87] It might seem strange that a man with such an intensely political background as

Herwegh, one of the important leaders of the 1849 uprising in Baden, would be interested in the apolitical philosophy of a reactionary such as Schopenhauer. But after a generation of neglect, Schopenhauer's writings enjoyed a surge of interest after the failure of the 1848–49 revolutions, and perhaps, in part, because of that failure. For those such as Herwegh or Wagner, who had held such high hopes for political change, Schopenhauer's pessimistic message of disengagement from the world offered a release from the disappointment they had suffered.

Wagner would not have reacted with such immediate interest in Schopenhauer if his thoughts had not already pointed him in a similar direction. He discusses this issue in an August 1856 letter to August Röckel where he writes, "In this respect, I experienced the most striking thing with my Nibelung poem. I gave it form at a time when I had built up an optimistic Hellenic world only in my thoughts." Wagner claimed that on a deeper level of the creative process, he "was unconsciously following a completely different, much more profound conception" that anticipated the views of Schopenhauer.[88] While Wagner may somewhat overstate the case, his correspondence supports his claim. The political failure of the 1848–49 revolutions undercut the Hellenic optimism—built on faith in freedom and democracy—with which he began his Nibelung project and prepared the ground for the apolitical pessimism of Schopenhauer.

Can Wotan's actions in the third act of *Siegfried* be seen as exemplifying Schopenhauer's beliefs? Sabor seems to suggest this when he quotes a passage from an earlier (January 1854) letter to Röckel, in which Wagner writes, "Wotan rises to the tragic height of willing his own destruction. This is the lesson that we have to learn from the history of mankind: to will what necessity imposes." Sabor then adds, "This accords well with the teachings of Schopenhauer, and Wotan tries to live up to the precept, but he finds it hard."[89] Sabor chooses his words carefully, because he knows it is a question of similarity rather than influence. Wagner had completed the poetic text of the *Ring* by the end of 1852; he wrote the letter to Röckel in January 1854, and he first read Schopenhauer in September 1854.[90] But Sabor points up a significant issue when he observes that Wotan finds it hard to live up to Schopenhauerian precepts. In fact, Wotan's actions, both in *Walküre* and *Siegfried,* show little resemblance to those of someone behaving in accordance with Schopenhauer's philosophy. Schopenhauer believed that freedom of the will was an illusion

except in the one very unusual situation in which an individual's will turned on itself and denied the will-to-live. Wotan's goal of a free hero, whose freedom clearly means freedom of the will, and his larger aim of a free humanity, similarly defined, have nothing to do with Schopenhauer's concept of the free will manifested in self-denial. The freedom of the will exercised by Brünnhilde would also fall in the category of an illusion according to Schopenhauer. Nonetheless, in Act III of Siegfried, when Wotan does finally use his free will to give up his position of power, knowing that this entails his own destruction as well as that of the gods, his action does seem to resemble Schopenhauer's concept of true freedom. But Wotan's motivation remains ambiguous. His action could also plausibly be seen as heroic self-sacrifice, undertaken to achieve the goal of a free humanity. It could be argued that in trying "to arrest a wheel on the roll," Wotan, in his finest moment, saves humanity by throwing himself under the wheel. Schopenhauer would also classify the idea of a free humanity as an illusion and would deny that self-sacrifice for such a goal would qualify as genuine self-denial, which he believed came only from a true understanding of reality.

This ambiguity in the poetic text, however, provides Wagner an opportunity to use the music to express a shift in the meaning of freedom. Although Schopenhauer cannot be found in the poetry, his ideas do find expression in the music, most particularly in a new motive Wagner associates with Wotan's action. The orchestra plays the new motive in the pause following Wotan's dramatic announcement, "*frei ich nun aus* [freely I now carry out]." Usually called the Welt-Erbe motive (motive of the World's Inheritance), it has been taken simply as a forecast of Wotan's announcement some seven bars later that he would leave the world to Siegfried (figure 3.10).

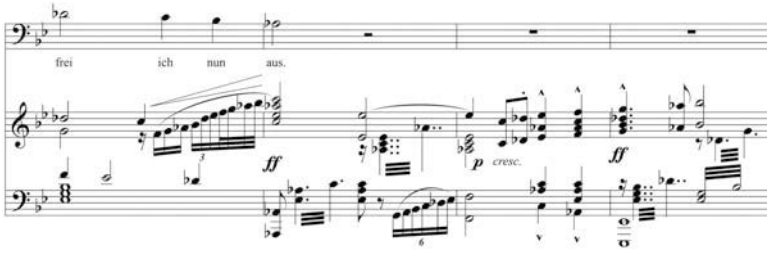



Figure 3.10 *Siegfried*, Act III, Scene 1

As Wotan indicated to Erda, he had once been prepared to accept the downfall of the gods when he was forced by Fricka to allow the death of Siegmund, his first hope for a free hero. Not knowing that Siegfried had been conceived and would keep alive the hope for a free humanity, Wotan cynically decided to leave the world to Alberich's son. Now he reverses that decision, and as he declares that he will leave his inheritance to "the most glorious of the Wälsung" the orchestra plays the Siegfried motive. The new motive, however, does not refer simply, or even primarily, to this legacy. The motive appears four times in the passage: first, immediately following the Freedom motive sung by Wotan as he refers to his free decision, then twice in close association with what he says about Brünnhilde, and finally when he refers to the eternally young couple, Brünnhilde and Siegfried. Only in this last instance does the motive have a clear association with the idea of Wotan's legacy. The Welt-Erbe or World Inheritance label suggests only a secondary level of meaning to this complex symbol. Wotan's free decision combines the meaning of free will and the freedom of self-denial and he sings it to the Freedom motive, which leads directly into the new motive's first appearance. So this adds the freedom of self-denial to the context defining the new motive's primary meaning, which becomes more apparent when Wotan goes on to tell Erda about their daughter. He first tells her that Brünnhilde will be awakened from her magic sleep by the hero, and the second segment of the Freia motive, expressing compassionate love, accompanies this reference to his daughter. He then says that, on awakening, she will carry out a "world-redeeming act," and the new motive first accompanies and then follows his statement (figure 3.11). The motive is linked here and elsewhere with this hope for world redemption, and should, therefore, more aptly be called the

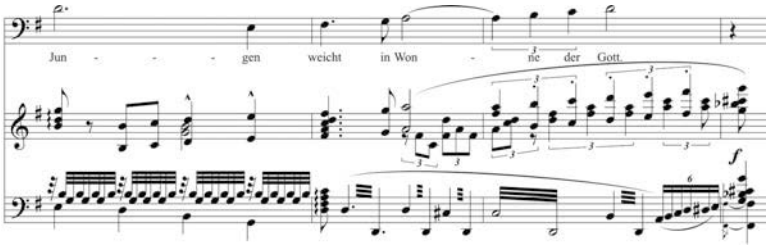


Figure 3.11 *Siegfried*, Act III, Scene 1

motive of World Redemption. The motives and words of the scene, taken together, convey the idea that love and the freedom of self-denial point the way to world redemption.

The history of this particular motive allows for much more certainty about its meaning than usual. Wagner composed the music to the third act of *Siegfried* long after he had become an ardent disciple of Schopenhauer's philosophy, and in the interim he had conceived a new project that directly reflected Schopenhauer's influence. Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*, first published in 1818, profited from and strongly reinforced a growing European interest in Eastern thought. Schopenhauer used terms derived from these traditions to convey many of his most important concepts, including those expressing his beliefs in the illusory nature of physical reality (veil of Maya) and in abandoning the will to live (Tama-Guna). Wagner read *The World as Will and Representation* in the fall of 1854, and as Wolfgang Osthoff writes, "Animated by that and parallel to its decisive impression, he began to be deeply engrossed in the subject of India, particularly with the lessons and legends of Buddhism."[91] This inspired him to plan a new musical drama on the subject, to be called "Die Sieger [The Victors]." He progressed no further than writing a prose sketch and composing a single motive intended to express the central idea of the work, but many years later, after giving up the project, Wagner used the motive in the final act of Siegfried,[92] where it is introduced by the Freedom motive. The final note of the Freedom motive in the vocal line—sung to Wotan's words: "*frei ich nun aus* [freely I now carry out]"—coincides with the first note of the motive taken from "Die Sieger" in the orchestra. Wagner clearly intended to establish a close relationship between the motive and the idea of freedom.

The Freedom motive and the motive associated with redemption from "Die Sieger" reappear together a number of times later in the *Ring*, and in these various joint appearances, including the first one, they take on an additional specialized meaning beyond what they have on their own—just as would be the case with words and phrases repeatedly associated in ordinary language usage. So understanding how Wagner planned to use the redemptive motive in "Die Sieger" clarifies its meaning in the particular context of this passage and in those later passages as well. Osthoff's close study of the project led him to see it as expressing "the redemption of individuals . . . through the renunciation of all natural passion and all personal desire." He

describes it as a motive of "new recognition, renunciation, purification, redemption."[93] After it had been incorporated into *Siegfried*, Wagner's biographer, Carl Glasenapp, claimed to have learned its origin and its meaning of "joyous renunciation "from the Master's own mouth." Heinrich Porges, who worked closely with Wagner in the first Bayreuth production of the *Ring*, called it the Redemption Theme. He also reported that Wagner himself, when playing the passage remarked that "It must sound like the proclamation of a new religion."[94] Drawing together these various pieces of evidence, some involving the motive in isolation and others in combination with the Freedom motive, hope for redemption emerges as a key element of its meaning.

The motive's second and third appearances in *Siegfried* confirm and expand on this conclusion. After revealing to Erda that the hero (Siegfried) would awaken Brünnhilde, Wotan sings the motive to the first part of the statement: "awakening, your knowing [*wissendes*] child will carry out a deed to redeem the world." The orchestra plays the motive twice in succession to accompany the full statement. The Freedom motive does not lead into the World Redemption motive in this passage or in its final appearance in the scene, which comes when Wotan, referring to Siegfried and Brünnhilde, says "Whatever they may bring about, to these who are eternally young, the God blissfully yields."[95] The World Redemption motive begins in the vocal line and the orchestra with the word "young" and concludes with the end of the statement.[96] So in itself the motive expresses the hope for world redemption, and when used in association with the Freedom motive, it expresses the idea that the new conception of freedom as self-renunciation opens the way to this hope for redeeming the world.

Wagner's use of the motive from "Die Sieger" illustrates how the music of the *Ring* could revise the meaning of even the most important ideas previously expressed in the text. In the *Ring* poem, Wagner was bound to his earlier conception of free will based in autonomy, but his later composition of the music allowed him to graft onto that earlier meaning the later, Schopenuauerian idea of freedom based in a denial of self, a freedom that unchained the individual from the deterministic world of nature. Although quite different, the two ideas of freedom are not inconsistent. Wotan could use his freedom of the will to deny his continued existence and overcome his imprisonment in the world of *Verträge*, the world of nature. In so doing he could at

least glimpse a transcendent realm of being, unbound by the causal web of time and space, a realm free of the pain and tragedy inherent in the world of nature. The soaring World Redemption motive expresses this moment of release.

In the fourth occurrence of this motive in Act III, scene one of *Siegfried*, when Wotan gladly yields to the eternally young couple, Siegfried and Brünnhilde, he focuses his hope for world redemption on their relationship and their love. In the treatment of this issue, Wagner gave Schopenhauer's idea a mixed reception. Schopenhauer argued that overcoming the limitations of the individual self—what he called the principle of individuation—provided the key to any higher artistic or ethical experience. He believed that true love, in the form of sympathy or compassion (*Mitleid*—literally "suffering with") involved such a transcendence of individuation, but he dismissed sexual love simply as an affirmation of the will-to-live. However much he may have admired Schopenhauer, Wagner differed on this latter point. He believed that sexual love and compassionate love formed a whole, a belief he expressed musically in the Freia motive, where, as Cooke shows, the first segment of the motive expresses the sensuous and the second the compassionate aspect of love.[97] Nonetheless, the idea of compassionate love, as one aspect of an all-encompassing love, plays a crucial role in the *Ring*. Through its capacity to move the individual beyond the narrow concerns of self to some higher unity with others, it serves as a vehicle for freedom and redemption.

The idea of compassionate love points toward the romantic idea of a unity with others based on shared emotions. This idea appears directly in the poetic text of scene three as Siegfried and Brünnhilde each repeatedly express their sense of losing their identity in oneness with each other. Siegfried, for example, says "I am no more; would you be mine."[98] Brunhilde declares, ""I am no longer Brunhilde,"[99] and she tells Siegfried, "I am you, yourself, if you…love me."[100] In isolation, these comments could be read simply as the romantic hyperbole of new-found love, but a close reading of the text, in light of the meaning invested by the music, gives them deeper significance. For example, after Brünnhilde tells Siegfried, "I am you yourself," she goes on to explain at length the deeper significance of their love. She tells him that she will be wise for him and that "I am only wise [*wissend*] because of my love for you." She sings these words to the World Redemption motive, which the orchestra also plays in accompaniment (figure 3.12).

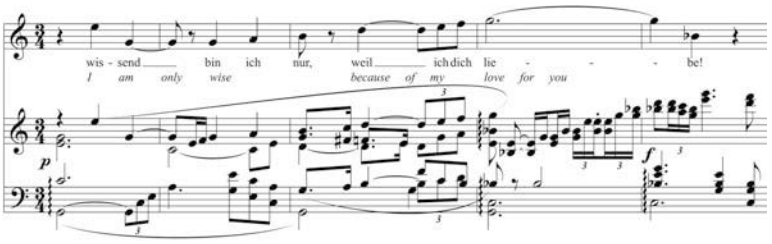


Figure 3.12 *Siegfried*, Act III, Scene 3

The meaning of her puzzling statement and of its association with the idea of redemption only becomes clear gradually as Brünnhilde tells the complicated story of her relationship with her father. She says that she alone divined Wotan's idea (*Gedanke*), an idea that she could never mention or even think, but could only feel. She says that she fought and battled and strove for this idea, that she defied him whose idea it was, that she was punished for it, because she did not think it, but only felt it. Then, she declares dramatically, "For the idea—may you justify it! ["es lösen," literally, "redeem it"]—was only my love for you."[101] Brünnhilde's great wisdom has revealed to her that everything about her, including her wisdom, and everything that has happened to her, including her love for Siegfried, has been part of Wotan's idea (*Gedanke*) from the time before she was born when he conceived a plan to rectify his tragic mistake. The music confirms the implications of Brünnhilde's explanation with the World Redemption motive, which the orchestra plays and then repeats to accompany the full length of her concluding statement.[102] Here again the music moves beyond the meaning of the text by connecting the idea of redemption to the process through which the lovers begin to leave behind their individual identities to experience a higher unity in love. Later in *Götterdämmerung*, the lovers seem to fail in this effort, but in *Siegfried* a joyous optimism prevails.

This passage also explains the great importance of Brünnhilde's wisdom. For Wotan's plan to succeed someone other than he has to carry it out, and since he cannot reveal the plan (as Brünnhilde indicates) it requires supernatural wisdom to divine and execute it. She soon loses her wisdom, before regaining it at the conclusion of *Götterdämmerung*, and this loss (combined with Siegfried's ignorance)

helps precipitate the tragedy that eventually engulfs the lovers. As developed in the early versions of the poetic text, this tragedy points toward an idea of redemption, but Wagner redefined what he meant by redemption when he composed the music. From a redemption based on all-encompassing love and the freedom of autonomy, he moves to a stronger emphasis on the compassionate dimension of love as the motive force leading to the freedom of self-transcendence and community.

In these early instances in the *Ring*, where Wagner first introduces this new conception of freedom, he takes care to retain a link to the earlier idea lodged in the text, while allowing the music to convey the new concept. For example, at the conclusion of Wotan's conversation with Erda, he uses his newly embraced freedom *in* the world (free will) to choose freedom *from* the world. The Freedom motive appears again at the very end of Act III, scene three, where it has the same useful ambiguity, and here too it is closely tied to love. At the end of scene three, presumably because her wisdom has revealed it to her, Brünnhilde anticipates the destruction that awaits her and Siegfried, but the strength of her love allows her to accept it joyously. Charmed by Siegfried's latest display of childlike ignorance, she tells him, "Laughing I must love you; laughing I will go blind; laughing let us perish, laughing be destroyed."[103] The reference to going blind anticipates her situation in *Götterdämmerung*, where the loss of her wisdom blinds her to Hagen's deception.[104] She then bids farewell to the world of the gods, which she foresees in ruins and invokes a blessed end for them.

One of the motives that accompany her words, the motive of Love's Greeting, enters as she envisions the end of the gods' world, and continues through her next two lines in which she addresses the Norns. The motive of Love's Greeting, which first appears at the beginning of the scene, derived from the segment of Freia's motive expressing compassionate love, and it reappears frequently through the scene.[105] In this, its last appearance in *Siegfried*, Brünnhilde sings it, accompanied by the oboes, clarinets, and horns, to the beginning of the line, "Rend, Norns, your web of fate." On this occasion, in contrast to all its previous appearances, and in the vocal line alone, it leads directly into the Freedom motive sung to the words "web of fate [*Runen-Seil*]." Wagner's meaning could not be more clear. Rending the deterministic web of fate allows humanity to be free. In this passage Wagner again combined the two meanings of freedom, the free will achieved when the web of fate breaks, and the freedom of self-transcendence expressed

by joining the Freedom motive to that of Love's Greeting, with its message of compassionate love (figure 3.13). The joining of these two motives creates a composite motive, for which the label Love's Freedom seems appropriate, and this composite motive reappears a number of times in *Götterdämmerung*, where it plays an important role in expressing the nature of the relationship between the lovers.

As she continues to see into the future, Brünnhilde next envisions the "twilight of the gods [*Götterdämmerung*]," and declares, "Night of destruction's mists, enter!" As she had done a few lines earlier, she sings the final words, "neb'le herein!" to the Freedom motive (figure 3.14). Having forecast humanity's freedom, first from the Norn's web of fate and then from the power of the gods, the music points forward to redemption. After a brief pause, Brünnhilde sings the World Redemption motive to the words, "Now Siegfried's star shines upon me" (figure 3.15).

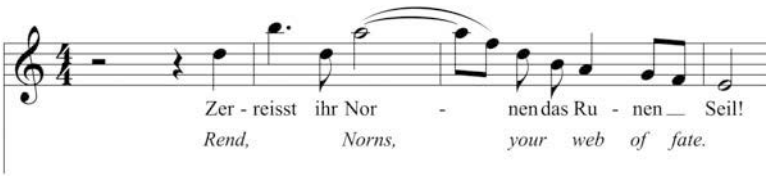



Figure 3.13 *Siegfried*, Act III, Scene 3

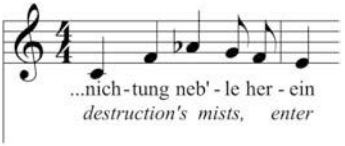


Figure 3.14 *Siegfried*, Act III, Scene 3

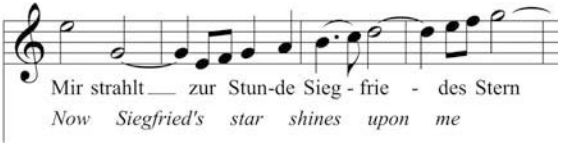



Figure 3.15 *Siegfried*, Act III, Scene 3

The passage as a whole expresses ideas similar to those associated with Wotan's great moment in scene one, and once again Wagner uses the music to modify and elaborate the tragic message expressed in the poem. The Freedom motive still conveys the idea of freedom of the will, but as in scene one, its associations with a cheerful acceptance of death and the overcoming of the self in compassionate love, give it the additional meaning of freedom *from* the world. And by closely preceding the World Redemption motive it suggests that this kind of freedom leads to redemption. *Siegfried* concludes to words and music that drive home this message with renewed force. The World Redemption motive accompanies the final words, "glowing love, joyous death."[106] The joy will last only through the prelude to *Götterdämmerung*; after that, as the impending tragedy gains increasing momentum, the audience enters a world dramatically different from that of *Siegfried*.

V

In *Götterdämmerung*, autonomous freedom remains an important theme, but Wagner uses the music to present a much more critical view of it than he did in *Siegfried*. Nothing suggests that this represents a further change in Wagner's beliefs. He composed the last act of *Siegfried* only shortly before the beginning of *Götterdämmerung*; rather, the difference reflects the dramatic requirements of expressing his ideas in a manner consistent with the existing text and music. In *Siegfried*, he used the motives of Freedom and World Redemption to draw together the ideas of freedom as autonomy and freedom from the self; in *Götterdämmerung* he distinguishes between the two in a way that presents the freedom associated with autonomy as a hindrance to achieving the world redemption envisioned by Wotan.

In the prologue to *Götterdämmerung*, the Norn's scene directly broaches the issue of freedom when the web of fate finally breaks, symbolizing the victory of freedom over necessity. Immediately before this happens, the music alludes to the free hero, Siegfried, with the motives of his Sword and Horn Call, pointing to his role as the champion of freedom from the determinism represented by the Norns. The second instance of the Horn Call comes in the measure before the break occurs.[107] Then, as the Norns cry, "It breaks!" the orchestra plays the motive of the Curse with great force. This does not mean that "the curse rises to break their rope," as Ewans

asserts.[108] Rather, it means that the curse that had been woven into the web of fate remains a danger to the world even when freedom has replaced divine necessity, the danger of being dominated by the power and avarice represented by the ring, the danger that the power of the gods will simply be replaced by the power of gold. The allusions to Siegfried immediately before the break point to him as the causal agent, and a later passage in *Götterdämmerung* confirms this. In the prologue, the Norns are predicting events in the future, including the break in the web of fate. In the last act of *Götterdämmerung*, as the Rhinemaidens try to persuade Siegfried to return the ring to them, they warn him that its curse has been woven into the Norn's web. He arrogantly rejects their advice, saying that if what they say is true, he will simply use his sword to cut it apart. So both the text and the music point to Siegfried as the agent responsible for destroying the web of fate. As the drama's "free hero," Siegfried himself, as well as his sword and his horn call can all represent freedom. Unfortunately for Siegfried, his freedom will not help him escape the tragic consequences of the ring's curse; indeed, it becomes a contributing factor to the tragedy.

Wagner establishes the distinction between autonomous freedom and freedom from the self in the second part of the prologue where Siegfried and Brünnhilde experience their last happy moments together. As in the final scene of *Siegfried*, their words express their desire to move beyond their individual selves to find a unity in love, but in contrast to *Siegfried*, the music indicates that they will fail. Initially, the situation seems hopeful, particularly with respect to Brünnhilde, who has sacrificed so much for her love of Siegfried. Not only has she given him her store of divine wisdom, but she has also lost her superhuman strength because of him. Without the divine powers that previously defined her identity she has only the capacities of a mortal woman, but these include an ability to love and to strive for a loving unity with Siegfried, whom she refers to as "the hero I now honor [m*ich neige*]." As she sings these words the oboes accompany her with the composite motive of Love's Freedom (figure 3.16). However, in contrast to its one previous appearance at the end of *Siegfried*, the freedom element of the motive has no link to any idea of free will in the text. The idea of freedom through the self-transcendence of compassionate love, that Wagner first combined with the original meaning of freedom as free will in Wotan's interchange with Erda, and again combined with it in the first occurrence

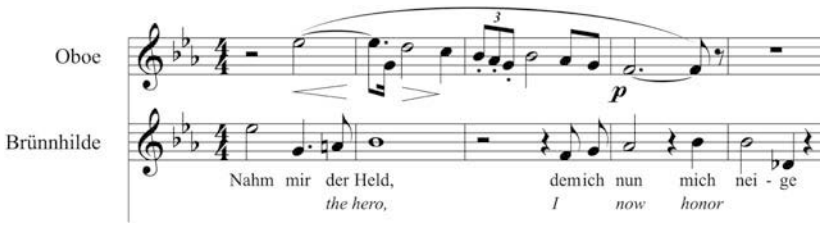



Figure 3.16 *Gotterdammerung*, Prologue

of Love's Freedom in the last act of *Siegfried*, has now become its sole meaning in this composite motive.

Wagner's prose essays clarify the concept expressed by the motive of Love's Freedom. In an 1850 essay he wrote, "Only through the greatest power of love . . . can we arrive at true freedom [*Freiheit*], for there is no freedom but that which is common to all men."[109] In another essay, when discussing the human need for love he wrote, "The human being finds his understanding, his redemption and satisfaction . . . only in something higher, and this is the human race, the community of mankind."[110] This capacity for a love of something higher, a human community beyond the self, yields what Wagner believed to be true freedom, and he expressed this idea in the composite motive of Love's Freedom.

Wagner makes a similar transition in the meaning of the Freedom motive when it reappears in association with the motive of World Redemption at the end of the prologue. Before Siegfried departs on his mission to accomplish more heroic deeds, Brünnhilde reminds him of all the things he needs to remember: the oaths that unite them, their fidelity, and most important, "the love for which we live." As she tells him, "then Brünnhilde burns forever, holy in your breast."[111] She sings the last four words to the Freedom motive, and on its last note, the violins begin a powerful, extended statement of the World Redemption motive (figure 3.17). In its musical treatment, this passage resembles Wotan's moment of freedom in Act III of *Siegfried*, but where the earlier instance involved both kinds of freedom, Brünnhilde's words express only the freedom of transcending the self in love. The hope for world redemption rests on the ability of the lovers to free themselves from their individual selves and find a oneness with each other beyond individuation, and the motives expressing this kind of freedom are now sharply distinguished from

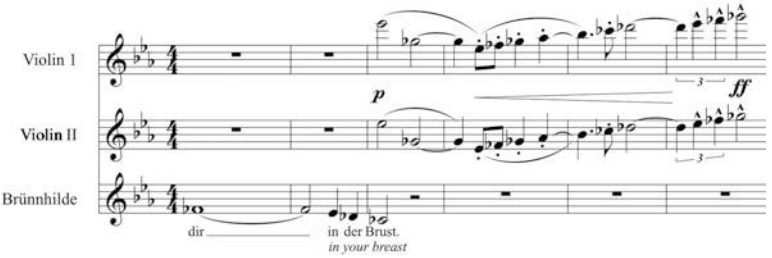



Figure 3.17 *Gotterdammerung*, Prologue

those expressing the freedom of autonomy. From this point on in the music of *Götterdämmerung*, the motive of Love's Freedom consistently expresses the freedom of self-transcendence in love, as does the basic Freedom motive when associated with the motive of World Redemption. When the basic Freedom motive stands alone, it represents the freedom of autonomy and free will, as does the Freedom motive in its doubled form.

During the remainder of the prologue, the words speak of self-transcendence in love, while the music tells the audience again and again that the hope for this kind of self-transcendence will not be realized. Responding to Brünnhilde's urgings to remember their love, Siegfried gives her the ill-fated ring as a symbol of that love. Although the dragon had told him of the curse, Siegfried failed to comprehend him and does not realize that with his action the curse will now fall on Brünnhilde. In the closing part of the prologue, as the lovers declare their oneness and their love for each other, the music expresses a very different message. When Siegfried tells Brünnhilde that all his future victories and accomplishments will really be hers, he concludes by declaring, "I no longer regard myself as Siegfried; I am only Brünnhilde's arm." But while the words speak of his oneness with Brünnhilde, the music speaks of his autonomy. The doubled form of the Freedom motive accompanies his statement that he no longer regards himself as Siegfried (figure 3.18).

In *Siegfried*, when Wagner employed the doubled form of the motive in Wotan's conversation with Alberich, it served to emphasize to Alberich how completely Siegfried was on his own. In all its previous appearances it unambiguously stood for autonomy, and it stands for autonomy here. Brünnhilde replies to Siegfried's statement by declaring, "If only Brünnhilde were your soul!" The doubled

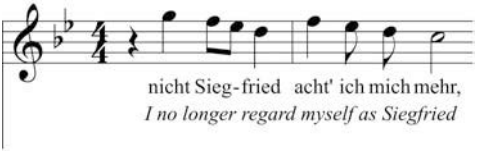



Figure 3.18 *Gotterdammerung*, Prologue

motive accompanies her words. When she asks him if he will be both Siegfried and Brünnhilde, he replies that wherever he is, both of them would be there, as the doubled form of the Freedom motive emphasizes his separateness to the word "both." Brünnhilde then invokes the gods to look down on the "blessed couple," and the orchestra accompanies her words, "Oh, holy gods" with the doubled Freedom motive. She asks, "Separated, who would divide us?" and the doubled motive accompanies "separated"; she declares, "Divided, we will never be parted," as the doubled motive accompanies "divided."[112] As Sabor observes, "Siegfried's protestations of love and fidelity have an ominous ring…Even more alarming are the recurrent warnings expressed by the Freedom motif—freedom to wander and freedom from togetherness."[113] Over and over again the music tells the listener not to believe the declarations of unity in love. As Siegfried departs on his journey, the orchestra plays the doubled Freedom motive repeatedly, until, as the stage directions indicate, he has disappeared from the view of the audience.[114]

By creating this stark contrast between the message of the words and that of the motives, Wagner could suggest his ambivalence about freedom and autonomy at the very beginning of *Götterdämmerung*, where the poetic text made no reference to freedom. The ideals that had inspired him at the time of the 1848–49 revolutions seemed inadequate or even harmful by the time he composed the music. Community and freedom from the self had replaced autonomy and freedom of the will as his guiding ideals. In the first act of *Götterdämmerung*, the ambivalence of the prologue gives way to harsh criticism of autonomous freedom as Siegfried enters the world of power and politics at the court of Gunther, the son of Gibich. After drinking the magic potion that causes him to forget Brünnhilde, Siegfried swears an oath of blood brotherhood with Gunther. This seals their agreement that in exchange for permission to marry Gunther's sister, Gutrune, Siegfried will abduct Brünnhilde and bring her back

to become Gunther's wife. Within the framework of the story, this agreement appears to result from the magic potion and the curse that has fallen on the lovers, but for Siegfried the marriage to Gutrune makes sense in another way. It would give him an important position of power and prestige within Gunther's realm. Forgetting his relationship with Brünnhilde fully restores his autonomy and allows him to exercise his freedom in the hitherto unfamiliar sphere of politics. Right before Siegfried plunges into the immoral and deadly entanglements of Gunther's court, he has one last moment of integrity and innocence. When Gutrune offers him the magic potion that will lead to his destruction, he thinks of Brünnhilde, and makes the drink a toast to their love.[115] With this last flicker of hope, he enters the dark world of the Gibichungs.

When Siegfried and Gunther conclude their agreement with the ceremony of blood brotherhood, the Freedom motive takes on a new and sinister role. Cooke points out that it provides the basis for the Blood Brotherhood motive,[116] and the Freedom motive also appears directly. When Siegfried declares, "Blood brotherhood—swear an oath!" he sings the first two words to the Blood Brotherhood motive (figure 3.19), and in the orchestra the tubas follow his statement with the motive of the Curse, followed in turn by the horns playing the Treaty motive (figure 3.20). Then the strings play Loge's motive at length (figure 3.21). This dense cluster of motives expresses an ominous message. The motive of the Curse enters on the word "oath," with its last note being held through most of the Treaty motive; the oath binding Siegfried to Gunther, which has the legal status of a contract or treaty, is cursed. Further, the last note of the Treaty motive, in the horns, is held through the first five measures of Loge's motive and then picked up by the tubas and held through the last five measures.[117] Loge, the god of fire, is also the god of lies.[118] In this passage, his motive stands for the deception underlying the legal relationship established by the oath of blood

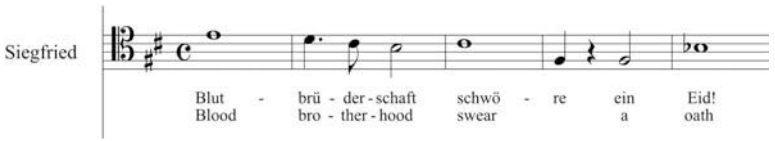



Figure 3.19 *Gotterdammerung*, Act I, Scene 2

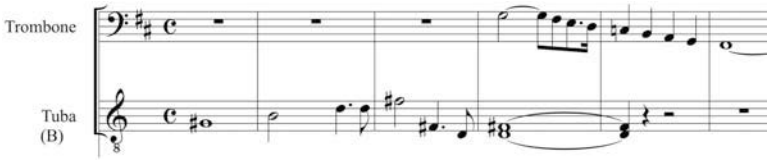



Figure 3.20 *Gotterdammerung*, Act I, Scene 2

Figure 3.21 *Gotterdammerung*, Act I, Scene 2

brotherhood. The Freedom motive appears toward the middle of the ceremony. Gunther and then Siegfried each sing it to the words, "Happy and free [*Froh und frei*]," with Siegfried starting it a step higher, and then to the beginning of the line, "Let there blossom from our bond [*entblühe dem Bund*] blood brotherhood today."[119] The oboes double their Freedom motive and beginning on the word "today" the horns play the Treaty motive, to set the seal of legality on the agreement.

What, then, did Wagner intend by introducing the idea of freedom into this disreputable ceremony? Never before had the Freedom motive appeared in close proximity to the motives representing deception and the curse. Why did he base the Blood Brotherhood motive on it and, thereby, associate the entire ceremony with the idea of freedom? The words, "*Froh und frei*" provide a clue. They contain the only direct reference to freedom in the text, the reference that provides a link for the appearance of the Freedom motive and, thereby, allows Wagner to present such a negative view of political freedom. This line did not appear in the text of *Siegfrieds Tod* that Wagner completed toward the end of 1848. He took the line from his opera *Rienzi,* which had idealized political freedom, and there it had an unambiguously positive meaning. Nor was the line included in the revisions Wagner made in early 1849, and since Wagner did not revise the work further until after he fled Germany in the wake of the failed Dresden uprising, it was added after that event.[120]

The reason why Wagner added the line lies in the process of political disengagement that began for him even before the May 1849 failure of the Dresden uprising. The editors of his collected letters comment on his impatience with the political activities of the Frankfurt Parliament as early as the late summer of 1848: "The boring negotiations in Frankfurt and the wrangling of the parties disappointed him."[121] With the failure of the Dresden uprising, less than a year later, disappointment turned to catastrophe, the word Wagner himself used to describe the outcome. Having staked everything on the expected victory of the revolution, Wagner faced not only the defeat of his political hopes, and the loss of his professional position, but also the likelihood of imprisonment, should he be captured. This personal and political disaster produced a surprising reaction that he described in an 1851 essay. After criticizing the purely political conception of the revolution and the "lies and hypocrisy of the political parties,"[122] he wrote that following the failure of the uprising—once the first painful impressions had passed—he experienced an incomparable feeling of well-being. "I felt free, free from the world of tormenting [*marternder*], always unfulfilled wishes. For the first time in my life, I felt myself through and through free."[123] Retrospective descriptions of earlier feelings, such as this one, often prove unreliable, but a letter Wagner wrote immediately after the uprising shows he was not simply reading later feelings back into his 1849 experience. Having learned that a warrant had just been issued for his arrest, Wagner wrote his wife on May 20, 1849, "Good then! It is done! The measure of my soul's torment [*Marter*] is full: finally—I again feel free."[124] The unmistakable similarity of thought and language (the literary leitmotif in the form of the rarely used word "Marter" subsequently echoed as "marternder") in the 1849 letter and the 1851 essay support the date Wagner gives for his feeling of liberation in his later and fuller description of the experience.

The freedom Wagner had championed at the beginning of the 1848–49 revolutions and had affirmed in the 1848 prose sketch for his Nibelung drama, political freedom based on free will and the freedom of the individual, had failed to carry the day. It had become ensnared in the endless political disputes of the Frankfurt Parliament, and had lost any appeal it had ever held for the common man. Wagner makes this point explicitly in his correspondence with his close friend, Theodor Uhlig. In a letter of October 22, 1850, he responded to Uhlig's hope for an alliance between the constitutionalists and those

favoring democracy, by asking, "Do you believe that anyone will still do battle, *for politics*?...I tell you, not one hand will be lifted for democracy, because any political revolution has become absolutely impossible."[125] In another letter to Uhlig (September 18, 1850) he looked back on his own beliefs at the time of the 1848–49 revolutions, and observed, "Who, in the spring of 1848 was not filled with hope?...Reform and constitution, those were our watch-words, the flags under which we hoped to win and become blissful [*selig*]."[126] Wagner continued to believe that the social question could arouse the popular enthusiasm needed to fuel a revolution, and on this issue his views continued to be quite radical, perhaps even more radical than they had been in 1848–49.[127] This is what has misled scholars who have dismissed the possibility that his political disillusionment may have influenced the ideas expressed in the *Ring*. Failing to distinguish between the political and the social, they have not realized that Wagner's disillusionment specifically involved his earlier political hopes rather than his social and economic views. Nor has it been appreciated that the process of political disengagement had essentially been completed by late May 1849, though Wagner himself says that in his 1851 *Communication to My Friends*. A belief in individual autonomy and freedom of the will underpinned the political aims of the particular political groups that Wagner dismissed as unviable in his 1850 letter to Uhlig. At this point in his intellectual development, Wagner had no reason to discard his philosophical belief in autonomy and free will—only later did his reading of Schopenhauer severely restrict that belief—but as a political hope, this kind of freedom had demonstrated its impotence. Having made political freedom a central theme in his early plans for the *Ring*, it would be surprising indeed if Wagner had not expressed his changed view of politics in the motives he used when composing the music for it.

The developments leading to the ceremony of blood brotherhood provide a good example. Despite the verbal protestations of the lovers that they would always be united, the music of the prologue had insisted on emphasizing Siegfried's autonomy, even from Brünnhilde, and when, in Act I, he enters the political world of Gunther's court, his autonomy proves to be a fatal weakness. When he first meets Gunther he emphasizes that his only possession is himself. "Neither land nor people have I to offer, nor father's house and court; my only inheritance is my own body."[128] Deceived by the magic potion, he then uses his freedom to enmesh himself in the power structure

of Gunther's world. Gunther and Siegfried each offer to become the other's man [*Mann*] or vassal, but Gunther makes his offer mostly out of politeness and respect for Siegfried's reputation as a great warrior. In reality, Gunther's position as the ruler of a kingdom puts him in a far superior position to that of Siegfried, as a man on his own (an autonomous man). The agreement between them reflects that reality. Siegfried, in return for providing service to Gunther (braving the magic fire to abduct Brünnhilde), will enjoy a powerful position at court (as the king's brother-in-law), an exchange of service for position common in medieval power relations between a lord (Gunther) and his vassal (Siegfried).

Later, on the eve of his marriage to Gutrune, Siegfried confidently takes advantage of this new position of power. When Brünnhilde accuses him of violating his agreement with Gunther (by being married to her) it threatens his position, and he reacts with the know-how of an unscrupulous politician. As Brünnhilde piles one accusation on another, Gunther's other vassals grow restless. Eventually they call on Donner, the god of storms, to purge the disgrace that Gunther has suffered. As Sabor observes, "The vassals have reached their verdict: Siegfried is guilty."[129] Though the magic potion has wiped out Siegfried's memory of his previous relationship with Brünnhilde, he does know that he deceived her in the course of her abduction, and he does express his regret to Gunther, "that I deceived her so poorly."[130] He handles the problem with the other vassals with assurance, declaring, "You vassals be on your way! Shun the bickering wife." Then, as he departs for the wedding ceremony, he says to them, "Follow me fellows! Come to the feast!"[131] In a completely unprincipled way, Siegfried takes command of a dangerous situation and skillfully defuses it.

Did Wagner really intend his free hero to appear in so unfavorable a light? Yes, he did. In her diaries, Cosima Wagner writes that he told her, "The best thing about him is the silly boy…The adult man is horrible."[132] When the magic potion obliterates Siegfried's love for Brünnhilde and, thereby, restores his autonomy, he uses it to establish a political alliance that deprives his freedom of any legitimate meaning. As Cooke points out, Siegfried and Gunther sing of their freedom in swearing the oath while in reality "they are both acting as mere pawns in Hagen's plot."[133]

Musically, Wagner expresses this perversion of freedom by using the Freedom motive as the basis for the motive of Blood Brotherhood.

He also emphasizes this important change in the role of freedom by the way he positions the Freedom motive at the center of the Blood Brotherhood ceremony. There, locked into a position of impotence, the doubled form of the motive symbolizing autonomous freedom makes its last appearance in the *Ring*. It closely follows two motives completely at odds with its basic spirit: the Treaty motive, representing power, law, and necessity, and the Blood Brotherhood motive symbolizing the political perversion of freedom. Then, these same motives follow it in reverse order, first the Blood Brotherhood motive again, then the Treaty motive again.[134] Freedom almost seems to be under armed guard. If Wagner intended the blood brotherhood ceremony as an allegory for the tragic fate of political freedom in the 1848–49 revolutions, he could not have done better.

VI

With this memorial to the inglorious fate of autonomous freedom as a political force in the world, Wagner opens the way for an affirmation of freedom from the world, the freedom of self-transcendence in compassionate love, expressed musically by the composite motive of Love's Freedom. The unfolding of the tragedy through the remainder of *Götterdämmerung* threatens to destroy the love between Brünnhilde and Siegfried and with it the hope that Brünnhilde can accomplish the world redemptive act that Wotan spoke of to Erda. That hope rests on the couple's ability to create a selfless unity in love, and although Siegfried violates that unity in his agreement with Gunther, the lovers ultimately are reunited and redemption attained, if only in death. The motive of Love's Freedom points the way to this ultimate triumph.

Immediately after Siegfried barters away his freedom and his love to the Gibichungs in the ceremony of blood brotherhood, Brünnhilde confronts a similar challenge from a different quarter. Her sister Waltraute comes to her with an urgent appeal to return the ring to the Rhinemaidens, thereby lifting the curse. For Brünnhilde, who knows nothing as yet of Siegfried's betrayal of her, agreeing to the request would mean renouncing the love for which she has sacrificed everything. Skillfully playing on Brünnhilde's strong feelings for her father, Waltraute describes his isolation and despair. She tells her sister that if the ravens Wotan dispatched to report back to him should return with good news (that the ring has been returned) it would bring one

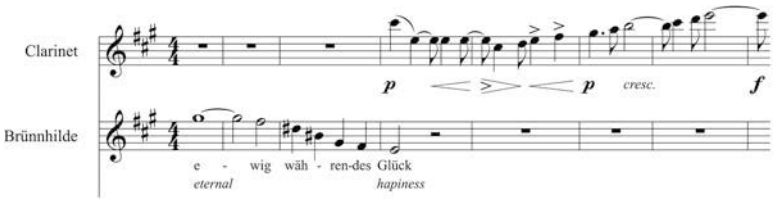


Figure 3.22 *Gotterdammerung*, Act I, Scene 3

last smile to his face. She says that when she pressed herself, sobbing, to his breast, Wotan's gaze softened for a moment as he thought of Brünnhilde, and he said "as in a dream" that if the ring were returned to the Rhinemaidens both God and world would be redeemed. Despite Waltraute's powerful appeal, Brünnhilde remains unmoved. Having been punished by Wotan for her love, she refuses to give up the ring that symbolizes her union with Siegfried. She defiantly declares that one glance at its bright gold was worth more to her than "the gods' eternal happiness. For blessed from it shines Siegfried's love for me." The music accompanying Brünnhilde's response conveys the psychological reality of her feelings and perceptions rather than the true state of affairs that is so very different. Beginning on the word happiness, the orchestra accompanies her statement with the motive of World Redemption, expressing the link between the love Brünnhilde sees in the ring and the world redeeming act she will ultimately perform (figure 3.22). That act, of course, will be to lift the curse by returning the ring to the Rhinemaidens, but at this point, having lost her divine wisdom, Brünnhilde does not know that.

Nor does Wotan know that Waltraute has gone on this mission. Having earlier declared his free intention to make Siegfried and Brünnhilde his heirs, he has not now changed his mind. Rather, Waltraute, motivated solely by a rational concern for the welfare of the gods (as opposed to Brünnhilde's loving concern for humanity) has acted on her own, taking Wotan's dreamlike statement as a wish for immediate action rather than an anticipation of future events. In refusing to help end "the torment of the gods," Brünnhilde shows that she has no desire to resume her role as Wotan's "blindly obedient slave." She acts as a mortal woman, filled with love for a mortal man, and in so doing she prepares the way for a redeemed world controlled by humanity rather than the gods. The motive of Love's Freedom appears in this context, where it emphasizes the importance of human love as a redemptive force. The

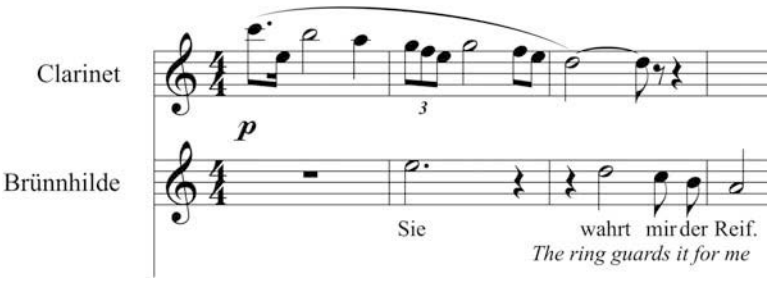


Figure 3.23 *Gotterdammerung*, Act I, Scene 3 (The freedom element of Love's Freedom motive and the basic Freedom motive in the vocal line overlap, but do not coincide.)

motive of Brünnhilde as a mortal woman, (which made its first appearance at the beginning of *Götterdämmerung*), precedes it, played by the clarinets following her words, "Siegfried's love, Siegfried's love!"[135] It continues in an unusually extended chromatic form as she sings, "Oh, if you could understand this bliss!" It then leads directly into the motive of Love's Freedom which accompanies the beginning of the line, "The ring guards it for me," and Brünnhilde sings the final words to the Freedom motive alone (figure 3.23). (The freedom element of Love's Freedom motive and the basic Freedom motive in the vocal line overlap, but do not coincide.) The extended chromatic treatment of the motive representing Brünnhilde as a mortal woman emphasizes both her humanity and the intensity of her love. In combination with the other two motives, the music tells the listener that Brünnhilde has affirmed her status as a mortal woman freely choosing the freedom of a love beyond the self.

Despite Brünnhilde's belief that the ring would protect her love, she learns almost immediately that it does not. The curse continues to hold, and her bond of love with Siegfried suffers as much from her actions as it had from his. Ultimately, she conspires to bring about his death, but as she herself forecast at the end of *Siegfried*, the lovers eventually experience a joyous reunion in death, a reunion associated with the composite motive of Love's Freedom. After its appearance in the encounter between Brünnhilde and Waltraute, this motive does not reappear until *Götterdämmerung*, Act III, scene two, when Siegfried dies. Immediately before this, Hagen gives Siegfried a second magic potion to make him remember what the first one caused him to forget. The returning memory of Brünnhilde rekindles

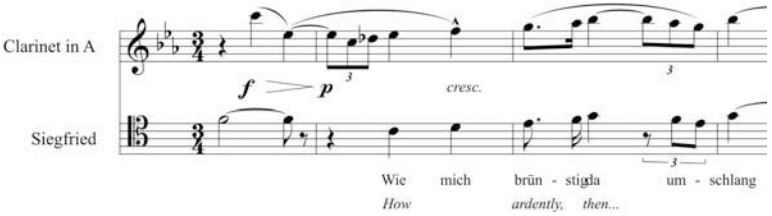


Figure 3.24 *Gotterdammerung*, Act III, Scene 2

his feelings for her. Following his recollection of how his kiss awakened her, the clarinets play the motive of World Redemption, and Siegfried sings it to the beginning of the phrase, "How ardently, then, the beautiful Brünnhilde's arm embraced me" (figure 3.24). The music tells the listener that the revival of his love restores the hope for world redemption. Hagen takes Siegfried's words as sufficient justification to kill him for betraying Gunther. As he dies, Siegfried seems to see Brünnhilde before him. Reliving the moments when he first awakened her from her magic sleep, he wonders who has again imprisoned her in sleep, and the "again" suggests a second sleep rather than just a memory of the first. After the lines, "he breaks her bonds:—then Brünnhilde's joy smiles on him," the composite motive of Love's Freedom appears three times, first in the strings, then in the flutes and oboes, and finally in the cellos as he recaptures her presence in his mind to the words, "These eyes forever open—the delightful stirring of her breath" (figure 3.25), Brünnhilde will never be lost to him again; Siegfried goes to his death experiencing the freedom of self-transcendence in love.

Immediately following Siegfried's death, Gunther and Hagen quarrel over the ring, while Gutrune attacks Brünnhilde for bringing about the tragedy. But Siegfried's death transforms Brünnhilde; with it, the divine wisdom she had given to Siegfried returns to her. She now understands everything that has happened and forgives him. The vindictive spirit that moved her to conspire with Hagen disappears, to be replaced by a commanding assurance. She tells Gutrune, "I am his true wife, to whom he swore eternal oaths before Siegfried ever saw you." Accompanied by the violins, she sings these words to the motive of World Redemption (figure 3.26).

In this, its last appearance in the *Ring*, the motive marks the reestablishment of the bond of love uniting Brünnhilde and Siegfried,

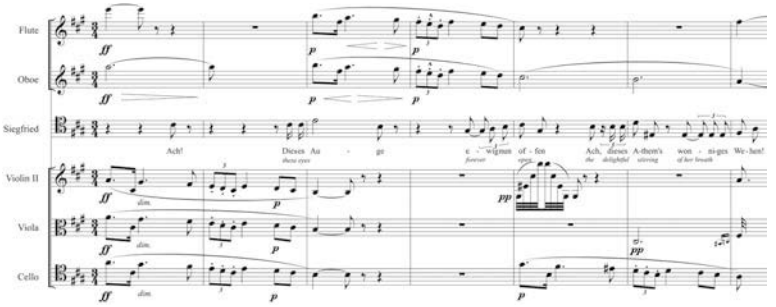



Figure 3.25 *Gotterdammerung*, Act III, Scene 2

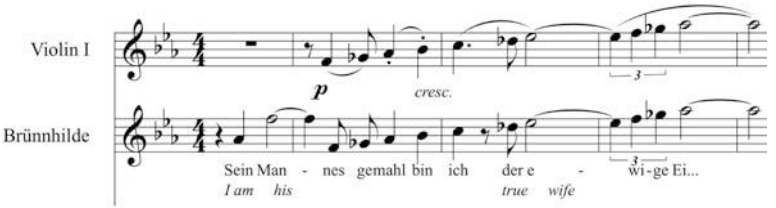


Figure 3.26 *Gotterdammerung*, Act III, Scene 2

and forecasts the final accomplishment of Brünnhilde's mission. In *Siegfried*, when Wotan had told Erda about Brünnhilde's world-redeeming deed, he said that she would accomplish it after being tenderly awakened by the hero. After the first, literal awakening, Siegfried has now awakened her again. In his final moments of life, not only does he relive that first experience with her, he also breaks the bonds of sleep a second time, as he clearly says. His death frees them and their eternal love from the burden of the curse, the second imprisoning sleep that obliterated the memory of that love, and as Brünnhilde refers to the "eternal oaths that united them," the cellos accompany these words with the Freedom motive (figure 3.27). The external control exercised over their lives by the curse has given way to the free choice expressed in their oaths of love.

Brünnhilde next directs the vassals to construct a great funeral pyre for Siegfried, and announces her intention to share his honor by joining him in the flames. The motive of Love's Freedom accompanies her preparations for death, just as its previous appearance had

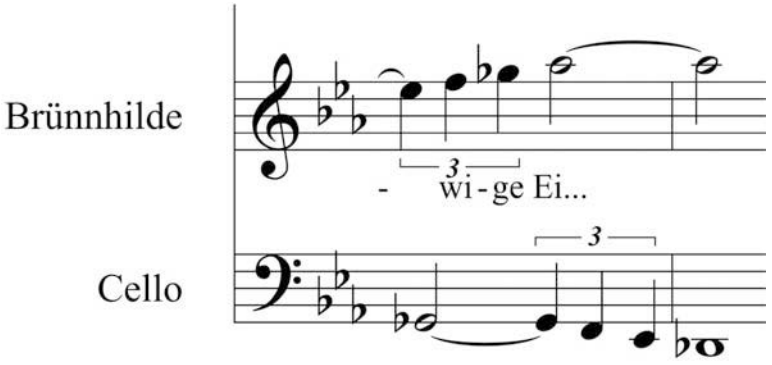



Figure 3.27 *Gotterdammerung*, Act III, Scene 2

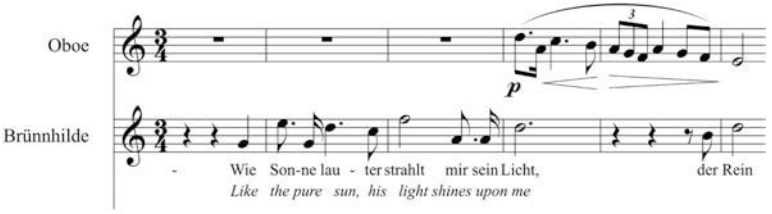


Figure 3.28 *Gotterdammerung*, Act III, Scene 2

marked Siegfried's last moments. After giving her orders to the vassals, she pauses to contemplate the dead Siegfried's face, as the motive appears in the clarinets with the instructions "very expressive," and the stage directions indicate that her features take on an ever more gentle transfiguration (*Verklärung*). Serene and joyous music anticipates Brünnhilde's release from the world as she prepares to join Siegfried in the transfiguring experience of freedom in death. When she sings, "Like the pure sun, his light shines upon me," the oboes play the motive of Love's Freedom for the last time, entering on the word "light" (figure 3.28).

The heavenly image evoked by Brünnhilde's words provides a fitting emblem for the fate of Wagner's "free hero." In the research for his Nibelung project, Wagner had found evidence that Siegfried was originally a god of light and the sun in the early Germanic myths, evidence that reinforced his idea of modeling his hero on the Greek

god Apollo, also a god of light. As his studies led him further into ancient Greek culture, he had even come to associate Apollo with freedom, arguing that he became the true national god of the Greeks after they placed "the beautiful and strong free individual" at the pinnacle of their religious consciousness.[136] The commentaries of Droysen, which exerted such a strong impact on Wagner's conceptions of drama by bringing Aeschylus plays alive in such a powerful way, also deepened his understanding of Greek freedom. They emphasized the political theme of freedom versus tyranny, while also expressing the Greek ideal of a balance between the freedom of the individual and the needs of the community, an ideal that Wagner seems to echo in his early prose sketch of the Ring project. For the ancient Greeks, however, freedom had no transcendental dimension. It was a quality of human nature to be expressed in the world, as it was for Siegfried in the earliest stages of Wagner's project.

The political disengagement Wagner experienced, when the failed revolutions of 1848–49 seemed to discredit the effectiveness of political freedom as a force for changing the world, fundamentally altered his conception of freedom by shifting the balance in his thought away from individual freedom toward the idea of a transcendent community beyond the self. In contrast to Greek ideas of freedom, the German tradition of freedom of the spirit did have a strong otherworldly strain, and in the wake of his political disappointment, this element—joined to Wagner's faith in love—emerged to find expression in the music of the Ring. His enthusiastic reaction to Schopenhauer's ideas, which may also owe much to his political disappointment, only reinforced this process. In *Götterdämmerung*, political freedom of the autonomous individual yields to a freedom beyond the self. As Brünnhilde's image suggests, in death the free hero has again become a god of light, but unlike Apollo, who inspired the ancient Greeks to affirm life in the world, he represents Wagner's late romantic apotheosis of freedom from the world.

4
Nietzsche and the Freedom of Self-Overcoming

With the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* in 1872, Friedrich Nietzsche put aside the caution expected of a classical philologist to embark on a bold new course in his professional career. This first book, which established his importance as a profoundly original thinker and a trenchant critic of contemporary culture, abandoned the narrow focus typical of classical scholarship in favor of a wide-ranging attempt to understand the origins of Greek creativity and use that understanding to foster a creative rebirth in his own time. The image Nietzsche chose to adorn the title page of his new book expressed his conviction that he and his time had reached a decisive moment of change. It depicted the Titan Prometheus in the act of regaining his freedom—his arms still bearing the broken chains, his right foot resting on the slain eagle that had tormented him, his angry gaze directed upward toward the god who had unjustly imprisoned him. The image provides an emblem of freedom and defiance for the cultural revolution Nietzsche hoped to inspire, while also conveying his personal declaration of independence from established professional constraints.

Nietzsche became interested in the myth of Prometheus long before he alluded to it on the title page of the *Birth of Tragedy*. In 1859, when he was only 14 years old, he wrote a one-act play on the subject, a play that focuses directly on the central issue of the German idea of freedom: the relationship of freedom to authority. In certain respects, this early work differs markedly from Nietzsche's mature outlook, but it shows how, even at this early age, he was beginning to grapple with the basic meaning of freedom and its relationship to self-knowledge and self-formation, issues that anticipate the idea of self-overcoming he later elaborated in such works as the *Untimely Observations*, and

Thus Spoke Zarathustra. The play also offers valuable insight into the personal, psychological forces that drove Nietzsche's early interest in these issues and later continued to shape his intellectual development during the time when he formulated his most important ideas.

I

The play, titled simply "Prometheus," provides an unusual treatment of the myth, particularly in the prominence given to Prometheus' father, Iapetus. He speaks the play's opening lines in which he tells his son that he intends to form an eternal alliance with the heavenly powers. Prometheus, realizing that such an alliance would place the Titans in a subordinate position, strongly objects, and refuses to give up his freedom: "I will not confine myself in such chains. I want to be free and rule those humans to whom I have given existence."[1] The dialogue continues with father and son representing the respective principles of divine authority and freedom, the opposing forces that must eventually be reconciled to ensure that humanity prospers.

Iapetus defends his decision by arguing that, without such an alliance, humanity would suffer from endless strife between the Olympian Gods and the Titans. Prometheus counters that his father's action "has eternally mortgaged my freedom, my happiness and my pride to this frightful alliance."[2] Although Prometheus shares his father's concern for humanity, he fears that the immoral behavior of the gods will warp its development. He observes that he cannot respect those whose conduct is not "pure and free from vice, and who now must provide the model for the lives of those poor creatures."[3] In this passage, Nietzsche anticipates one element of his later concept of self-overcoming. Although still in a religious context in this early work, the idea of humans taking some higher image as a model for what they will become points forward to the much more fully articulated and completely secular process of self-transformation that Nietzsche describes in *Schopenhauer as Educator*.

When the Olympian gods appear in the third scene of the play, their primary interest in humanity involves the question of control and ownership. When Pluto claims them for himself, on the grounds that every human is a "slave to death," Zeus and Poseidon advance their own selfish claims.[4] Only Athena shows genuine concern for the welfare of the human race. She brokers a compromise between the gods, and as a reward for her wise counsel Zeus agrees to give her

the power to make the human spirit receptive to learning and art. In the full Prometheus myth, Athena eventually comes to the aid of Prometheus by helping him steal the fire that humanity uses to advance to a state of civilization. Nietzsche's play establishes a strong dichotomy between the rulers of Olympus, who demand human obedience to authority, and Prometheus (aided by Athena) who promotes freedom and the advancement of humanity.

In the play, Prometheus hopes to forestall the triumph of the Olympians if, as he suspects, their power rests more on illusion than substance. So he tries to trick Zeus into accepting an inferior offering in the sacrifice that the Titans make to prove their loyalty. A failure by Zeus to see through the deception would signal his weakness, and Prometheus would then move to overthrow him. But when Zeus arrives to receive the offering, he instantly realizes the trick and denounces the betrayal. Swearing eternal vengeance, he disappears, leaving Prometheus trembling with fear. "Why do I shudder?" he wonders.[5] As Nietzsche presents Prometheus in this his final appearance in the play, his words and actions have nothing of the heroic about them. Acknowledging that he must now accept Zeus' power, he declares, "Despair overcomes me! How black the heavens have become! How it thunders! Where can I flee?"[6] However much the young Nietzsche may have admired Prometheus for his courageous affirmation of freedom, the danger of asserting it in the face of authority emerges much more powerfully.

The goal of achieving freedom and autonomy can loom as an overwhelming task for many adolescents, and the family situation of the 14- year-old Nietzsche may have made the prospect of such freedom all the more difficult for him to contemplate. The death of his father when Nietzsche was only four left him without the paternal guide that he seems to have yearned for in the early stages of his life. The comments from the journals and autobiographical essays he wrote during his childhood and adolescent years refer to his deceased father in glowing terms[7] and they convey a sense of longing to find a substitute for his missing father. For example, in his autobiographical essay of 1859, the year he wrote "Prometheus," he observed, "God has guided me safely in everything as a father would his weak little child."[8] The father–son interaction in "Prometheus" play out Nietzsche's inner struggle with this issue. No other treatment of the Prometheus myth, ancient or modern, introduces Iapetus in a speaking role or even refers to him in any important way. The prominence given to him in

Nietzsche's play can only be understood as a means of associating the theme of authority versus freedom with the relationship of father to son, and Nietzsche's version of the story proves Iapetus right in his belief that power and authority cannot be defied.

Another peculiarity in Nietzsche's treatment of the Prometheus myth reinforces this point. After Prometheus fails in his attempt to oppose Zeus, he finds himself under fierce attack. "Oh, what terrible images surround me: the band of Furies!"[9] The appearance of the Furies, the defenders of the familial blood tie, signifies a violation of that sacred bond. While Prometheus's failure to heed the advice of Iapetus might show a lack of proper deference to his father, that alone would not justify intervention by the Furies. But Prometheus's betrayal of Zeus would. As the father of the Olympian gods, Zeus exercises the authority vested in the head of the family, and although Prometheus was not literally a member of this family, Nietzsche makes a point of showing that he does belong to it so far as Zeus is concerned. At the beginning of the third scene, when Zeus mentions the alliance with the Titans he refers to "Iapetus and our son Prometheus,"[10] indicating that Zeus assumes the alliance implies an expansion of his family to include Prometheus. This would justify the intervention of the Furies to exact vengeance when Prometheus betrays him, and would further emphasize the danger of rebelling against authority. Nietzsche's introduction of the Furies into the Prometheus story has no more precedent in ancient drama than does his treatment of Iapetus, and since both these innovations serve to cast the struggle between freedom and authority in familial terms, Nietzsche's use of the myth suggests that he chose to pursue this idiosyncratic interpretation precisely because it allowed him to get at the familial origins of his own conflicted feelings about freedom and authority.

After the final appearance of Prometheus, Nietzsche concludes his play with a chorus of humans that proclaims the power of Zeus, while thunder and lightning accompany the choral song as if in celebration of the god's triumph. In the ancient versions of the Prometheus story, human agency plays a key role in securing the release of Prometheus from the long torment to which Zeus subjects him, but in Nietzsche's play the human chorus primarily emphasizes the moral conclusions to be drawn from the victory of Zeus. In the first of its three parts, the choral song affirms the absolute power of the Olympians and the inevitable defeat of rebels such as Prometheus. Anyone who dares assert his freedom, "Sinks down to dust and earth when he throws off

those chains that bind him."[11] The second part of the song, however, shows that Prometheus has not been forgotten. The song returns to the important issue raised early in the play when Prometheus expressed his fear that the immoral conduct of the Olympians would provide an unfit model for human aspirations. Although the chorus counters this fear by declaring that "the divinity that guides us is pure and guiltless," it then goes on to say that "we will travel through life following its model until genius brings down the torch."[12] The use of the word "until" seems to imply that when the torchbearer of genius—a clear reference to Prometheus—comes to bestow his gift, humanity may no longer need the guidance of the gods. The chorus concludes this second part of their song on a strongly ascetic note by lamenting the fate of those whose gods are not free of guilt and error as well as those who fear death and overvalue "the bliss of life" and earthly desire. It stresses the belief that through death the divinity simply leads us joyfully to our eternal goal.[13]

Although the third and final part of the choral song continues to emphasize a strongly religious point of view that Nietzsche would soon repudiate, it reveals another important element of connection between his adolescent play and his mature thought. Alluding generally to the final parts of the Prometheus story through a thick veil of Christian beliefs, the chorus laments the fallen sinner, who washes away his sin with "eternal tears, deep repentance and atonement," and who experiences the anger of the divinity as he looks up to it "in fear and trembling."[14] But then the chorus offers reassurance. The heavenly powers do not maintain their anger forever. Just when the sinner believes himself completely abandoned, "they approach, full of consolation and forgiveness."[15] Then, as the sinner stands purified before the divinity, his sins forgotten in the waters of Lethe, he experiences a glorious sunrise of renewal: "Out of the darkness of sin, out of the dawn of repentance, he ascends like the radiant eye of heaven."[16] The final lines of the play evoke a powerful image, an image strikingly like the one Nietzsche used to conclude his most famous work more than three decades later, when he wrote: "Thus spoke Zarathustra, and he left his cave, glowing and strong as a morning sun that comes out of dark mountains."[17] The similarity in the way Nietzsche concludes these two works points to the early origins of his belief in self-overcoming.

Zarathustra, the prophet of the overman embodies the idea of self-overcoming in its most fully evolved form, and in the genealogy of

Nietzsche's ideas Zarathustra is the direct descendant of Prometheus. Ironically, the adolescent drama about this pagan hero reveals the Christian beginnings of an idea that later provided the motive force of Nietzsche's crusade for a culture completely opposed to the values and traditions of Christianity. The choral song of "Prometheus" and the philosophical conception of self-overcoming are most obviously linked by their common focus on a process of transformation, but that transformation comes about in very different ways. The choral song describes an experience of Christian redemption, moving from an anguished self-knowledge of sin and guilt through atonement and lonely despair to a spiritual rebirth achieved through divine grace. The concept of self-overcoming also envisions a process of rebirth with the individual moving through various stages that Nietzsche described differently at different times, but the inner motivation of the individual drives the process rather than divine intervention.

The choral song expresses an outlook fully consonant with the devout conclusion of Nietzsche's 1859 autobiographical essay where he referred to God guiding him "as a father would his weak little child."[18] In the direct conflict between freedom and authority, Nietzsche comes down squarely on the side of authority: the governing authority of Zeus and the familial authority of the father. Operating within the German intellectual tradition that closely associated true freedom with authority and within a psychological framework in which intense idealization of his dead father worked against any break with memories or fantasies of paternal guidance, Nietzsche presented the defiant freedom of Prometheus as a source of guilt and suffering. Nonetheless, the early scenes of the play also convey a strong feeling of admiration for Prometheus's bravery in asserting his freedom, and the passage near the end, where the chorus refers to genius bringing down the torch, suggests that Nietzsche was seeking some way to reconcile freedom with authority. Humanity would follow the model of the Gods until it received the gift of fire that Prometheus stole from heaven, the gift of genius that would allow it to create a civilization. With that vital advance, humanity could take control of it own destiny; it could become free and do without the guiding influence of the Gods. So the defiant freedom that challenged the authority of Zeus is transformed through the transmission of the fire into the source of freedom for humanity, a freedom derived from self-advancement rather than defiance.

Nietzsche's attempt to reconcile freedom with authority at the end of his play does not overcome its many conflicting currents. The ending stresses a glorious rebirth out of a deep sense of sin, but the emotional weight rests on the sense of sin. The rebirth seems to point toward the later idea of self-overcoming in its imagery, but its literal meaning echoes the traditional idea of Christian redemption through contrition and divine grace. Nietzsche retained his focus on the strong feeling of guilt aroused by the idea of freedom as he continued to grapple with this issue in his later writings, but when he returned to it in *The Birth of Tragedy* he did so with vastly expanded intellectual horizons. From his new perspective he could re-examine the relationship of freedom and guilt in a way that allowed him to resolve it more satisfactorily as part of the wide-ranging analysis of ancient Greek culture that made his first book such an important achievement.

II

By the time Nietzsche assumed his position as a professor at the University of Basel in 1869 and began the preliminary studies that led to the *Birth of Tragedy*, his encounters with the ideas of Arthur Schopenhauer, Richard Wagner, and Gottfried Semper had radically altered his intellectual perspective. The key development that opened the way to the ideas of these thinkers came in 1865, during his first year as a student at the University of Bonn. At that time, after losing faith in the religious beliefs so evident in "Prometheus," he gave up his plan to follow in his father's footsteps by becoming a pastor. He changed his major from theology to philology, and endured the hostility of his mother in maintaining his refusal to participate in religious services.[19] Later that year, after he found and purchased the two volumes of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* in a book store in Leipzig, he enthusiastically embraced this newly discovered philosophical system as a replacement for his earlier religious beliefs.

As Rüdiger Safranski observes of Nietzsche's reaction to reading Schopenhauer, "an attitude of deep emotion manifested itself, one that could almost be called a conversion."[20] Nietzsche discussed the powerful impact of this experience when he wrote *Schopenhauer as Educator*, some years later, and what he reveals there suggests some of the reasons for the deep emotion. Nietzsche writes that from the first

he knew that he would read and pay close attention to every word Schopenhauer had written. "I trusted him at once and my trust is the same now as it was nine years ago."[21] He felt that he understood Schopenhauer as if he had written just for him, adding that, "if one feels obliged to imagine an auditor, one should think of a son being instructed by his father. It is honest, calm, goodnatured discourse before an auditor who listens to it with love."[22] The unresolved father/son issues that had caused Nietzsche to recast the Prometheus myth as a family drama in his early play reveal themselves again, six years later, in his reaction to reading Schopenhauer, a philosopher who fully repudiated Christian beliefs. After making the decisive break with the memory of his father earlier in the year, Nietzsche found a father substitute in Schopenhauer, who became an object of deep trust and love. The daunting task of establishing his freedom and autonomy stirred deep emotions that impelled him to find a new source of authority on which to rely.

Schopenhauer provided that source. Not only did Nietzsche listen with love to his calm fatherly tone of instruction, but he also found in Schopenhauer's life a source of inspiration for the way he would seek to live his own life. One of the most important of parental roles is providing a model for a child to follow, and Schopenhauer served that function for Nietzsche. He believed that Schopenhauer differed from most philosophers in actually attempting to put his ideas into practice, thereby offering an example that others could follow. And Nietzsche immediately made use of this example in attempting to reshape his own life in accordance with his new philosophy. Following Schopenhauer's argument for an ascetic life style, he practiced self-denial by forcing himself to follow a Spartan regimen in his diet and sleeping patterns.[23] The lofty position that Schopenhauer gave to art, and particularly to music reinforced Nietzsche's own passion for music and furthered his interest in pursuing the idea that humanity might find redemption in art. On both a personal and an intellectual level Schopenhauer provided a guiding influence that profoundly shaped the future direction of Nietzsche's life and thought.

The parts of Schopenhauer's philosophy that most immediately appealed to Nietzsche, the ideal of an ascetic life and the idea of a life absorbed in art, represented two possible responses to what Schopenhauer saw as the basic tragedy of life. Accepting Kant's dichotomy of a phenomenal world of nature ruled by the causality imposed by human intellect and an unknowable noumenal reality

underlying that natural world, Schopenhauer departed from Kant in asserting that the blind force of will constituted that unknowable essence of things. Because the human intellect shaped phenomenal reality by imposing on it what Schopenhauer called the "principle of individuation" along with the categories of time, space, and causality, the undifferentiated will could only appear in the world of nature in the form of individuated beings driven by a voracious will to live that set all against all. Blinded by the intellect to the underlying unity binding together all manifestations of life, humanity experienced a tragic existence of endless self-destruction. In its individuated form, the will manifested itself as the powerful driving force of unconscious instinct, impelling each individual to selfish assertion of the will to live despite the efforts of the intellect to assert control. This profoundly psychological outlook, which Schopenhauer richly illustrated with examples showing how intellect simply served the needs of the unconscious will, exerted a powerful influence on many late nineteenth-century thinkers, and Nietzsche fully incorporated it into his developing world view.

Although Schopenhauer thought the vast majority would find no way out of this tortured existence, he did believe that those few, who understood the true nature of reality, might find some release. Art offered one possible solace by virtue of its capacity to suggest the inner nature of things and also through its ability to suspend momentarily the constant assertion of the will when the aesthetic observer became fully absorbed in contemplating the work of art. Schopenhauer saw music as the highest of the arts because it excelled at accomplishing these two aesthetic functions. Through its capacity to arouse the inner world of emotion, it could fully engage the listener in the aesthetic experience and at the same time, by representing that inner world, it directly revealed the true nature of the will as could no other art. Schopenhauer also hoped that gaining artistic insight into the nature of things might ultimately lead to a more lasting solution to the tragedy of life. For those who were guided by art to live an ascetic existence it might be possible to deny the will to live and finally bring an end to the pain and suffering caused by their own existence.

Having left Bonn to pursue his philological studies at the University of Leipzig, Nietzsche proved to be an outstanding student. He became the protégé of Friedrich Ritschl, the most eminent classical philologist of the day, and with his help gained access to the elite world

of the professional academic. Ritschl, who regarded Nietzsche as his most able student, awarded him a prize in an essay competition and encouraged him to submit his work for publication.[24] While drawn to the large philosophical questions addressed by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche found that he also enjoyed working on the much more narrow issues that provided the substance of classical philology, and during his years at Leipzig he became an accomplished practitioner of this exacting form of scholarship. In 1869, he achieved the extraordinary success of being offered a distinguished professorship at the University of Basel even before he had finished his dissertation.[25] He was the youngest person ever to be given such a position in the history of the university. However important Ritschl's influence may have been in securing the appointment, it also testifies undeniably to Nietzsche's brilliance.

Nietzsche's move to Basel in 1869 brought him into close physical proximity to both Wagner and Semper, and even though the once warm friendship between these two men had cooled to the point that they no longer kept in contact, they remained linked in the impact they had on the development of Nietzsche's thought. Nietzsche had become acquainted with Wagner in Leipzig the previous winter when the composer heard of his abilities and arranged to meet him. Undoubtedly flattered by this attention, Nietzsche soon became a devoted follower, and not long after his arrival in Basel he visited Wagner and Cosima at their home in nearby Tribschen. After the visit, Cosima wrote in her diary, that Nietzsche "knows R.'s works thoroughly and even quotes from *Opera and Drama* in his lectures."[26] An accomplished musician himself, Nietzsche became convinced that Wagner's music would spark a renewal of cultural greatness in his own time. Over the following year, as he sought to move beyond the narrow limits of his philological studies and engage the larger philosophical issues that had so fascinated him in his reading of Schopenhauer, he drew on the theoretical structure Wagner had derived from his study of ancient Greek culture and came to see Wagner's musical dramas as a modern example of the art form that had inspired Greek genius.

Although Semper had broken off contact with Wagner after the acrimonious failure of the Munich theater project, he retained an invisible presence for both hosts and guests during Nietzsche's visits to Tribschen in the summer of 1869. In the spring of that year, Wagner had tried to heal the breach by writing a confused letter of

self-justification to Semper, but this attempt failed. The letter, which has survived, bears Semper's comment: "This letter, out of which I cannot make head or tail, I have left unanswered."[27] In early August Nietzsche sent Cosima a published copy of Semper's recent lecture "On Architectural Styles," and its arrival occasioned further regrets at the lapse of the earlier friendship.[28] After reading it herself, Cosima read it to Wagner, who deplored the fact that Semper was writing rather than building.

Later in August, when Nietzsche sent Cosima one of his own unpublished lectures, she responded enthusiastically with an elaborate comment that paid him the ultimate compliment of comparing his work to that of Wagner and Semper. Nietzsche, of course, would have grasped at once the various comparisons that Cosima drew in the work of the three men, but her meaning is lost to modern readers, who lack a close understanding of their work and its intellectual context. Situating her comment within that context requires a detailed explication of her various references, but doing so reveals the profound significance of the common intellectual framework shared by the three men.

Cosima writes, "To me, your renewal of August Wolf's approach to Greek scholarship forms a counterpart, not only to the way Wagner renewed the German culture of Goethe and Schiller that had blossomed in the Reformation, but also to Semper's Roman continuation of Alexander's architectural style."[29] While the scope of her comment ranged over the history of art and culture, her point focuses tightly on the essence of what Nietzsche, Wagner, and Semper had in common. The three elements of Cosima's comparison reveal a common pattern. A note Nietzsche wrote at this time explains why he would hope to follow in the footsteps of Friedrich August Wolf, a pioneering figure in early nineteenth-century philology.[30] Characterizing Wolf's unusually broad approach to his subject, Nietzsche describes his goal as, "Knowledge of ancient humanity itself," which would entail "the inclusion of philosophical and historical knowledge, through which we become acquainted with antiquity in all its aspects."[31] Nietzsche hoped to move beyond the usual philological preoccupation with narrow particularity to explore the very essence of the human spirit as it manifested itself in all the different facets of ancient Greek culture.

The counterpart to this in Wagner can be seen in the composer's admiration for the way Luther and the artists of the German classical period—Goethe, Schiller, and Beethoven—overthrew the foreign

influences (first the Pope and later the French) that had prevented German culture from expressing its true nature.[32] Wagner regarded these external influences as sources of fragmentation that obscured the inner oneness of the German spirit. He believed that his musical dramas would restore the lost unity of the individual with the community by revealing a deeper spiritual wholeness. Cosima saw a similar striving for wholeness in Semper's belief that modern architecture could transcend fragmentation to express a new cultural unity. In the lecture on architectural styles that Cosima had read earlier in the month, Semper explained how the architecture of Alexander the Great, with its implicit assumption of world sovereignty, provided a model for the Romans when they created their empire. In his own architectural projects, Semper drew on this Roman style to express his belief that architecture had to reflect the increasingly cosmopolitan culture of his time: "It represents the synthesis of two seemingly contradictory cultural forces: namely, striving toward individuality and merging into the collective."[33] In pointing to what she saw as a common concern with relating the parts to the whole, the appearance to the essence, the individual to the collective, Cosima found a way to suggest to Nietzsche that in Wagner and Semper he had found the ideal guides for his future intellectual development.

During the summer of 1869, Nietzsche devoted close attention to Semper's writings. In his scholarly work, Semper combined the qualities that Nietzsche saw as essential to achieving success in his own professional aspirations. Semper's on-site research into the polychrome decoration of Greek architecture had established his credentials as a classical scholar capable of unearthing important new evidence, and his theoretical work demonstrated his ability to incorporate that evidence into a broad analytical framework embracing all aspects of art, politics, and culture. As he began his research for the first of two lectures that he would eventually combine and expand into *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche turned to Semper's most important theoretical work, *Der Stil*, in his quest to understand the creative genius of ancient Greek art.

III

The interactive dynamic between Apollonian and Dionysian cultural forces that Nietzsche put forth in *The Birth of Tragedy* proved to be one of his most broadly influential conceptions, and the impetus

for his development of this idea came in part from his reading of Semper's *Der Stil*. The dramatic change in the understanding of Greek culture that emerged from Nietzsche's exploration of its irrational Dionysian roots bears a strong similarity to the earlier revolution in classical studies associated with the polychrome theory. In demonstrating the existence of color on ancient sculpture and architecture, the polychrome theorists added a dimension of feeling and vitality to the traditionally austere and measured image of the ancient Greeks, and by the 1860s their work had gained wide acceptance. Although Nietzsche's debt to the polychrome legacy has long been overlooked, the evidence of his notes shows that he did in fact draw inspiration from it in some of his most groundbreaking work. Infusing his own original ideas with insights derived from Semper, Wagner, and Schopenhauer, Nietzsche produced a dramatically new explanation of Greek creativity, an explanation for which he found an encouraging precedent in Semper's theory that the greatness of Greek art depended on various forms of dressing (*Bekleidung*) and masking, including the use of color.

The part of *The Birth of Tragedy* dealing with the interaction of the Apollonian and Dionysian forces initially took shape as a lecture titled "The Greek Musical Drama." Nietzsche delivered the lecture in January 1870, and the extensive notes that document his research into the topic reveal the process by which he developed his ideas. He introduced his central theme with the striking observation that the surviving dramas of the great Greek tragedians actually provided only the librettos of works that originally depended as much on their music as on their words for producing their effect.[34] That ancient tragedies originally included a musical component had long been understood, but in Nietzsche's view the widespread assumption that the music was incidental to the dramas distorted their essential nature. Comparing this assumption with the misconceptions of those who had earlier resisted the idea of polychromy, he observed, "Not long ago it was an unquestioned aesthetic assumption that all ideal plastic art must be without color, that ancient sculpture did not allow the use of color."[35] Nietzsche believed that the powerful music of the tragedies, like the brightly painted works of sculpture and architecture, attested to the existence of an underlying, long neglected, dimension of ancient Greek culture.

Nietzsche's research notes show that he relied directly on Semper's *Der Stil* in looking to the earlier victory of the polychrome theorists as

a precedent for success in his own assault on the established conception of Greek drama. He writes, "The polychrome view of the ancient plastic arts, according to which they must no longer be thought of as naked but as dressed with a colored covering, made headway very slowly, and with the greatest resistance from the hyper-hellenists."[36] Much of this sentence comes word for word from Semper's book.[37] In preparing for his lecture, Nietzsche took a series of notes from his reading of *Der Stil*—often copying whole passages—and then incorporated parts of them directly into his text. In doing this, he certainly made no attempt to hide his intellectual debt to Semper. Later in the lecture, he quoted him directly, citing the views of the "greatest living architect,"[38] a reference to Semper that no Swiss audience could fail to understand. In his use of this passage, as well as a number of others from *Der Stil*, Nietzsche built on Semper's work to develop a conception of Greek musical drama that fully supported the aesthetic theories of both Semper and Wagner.

One of the most important of the passages Nietzsche read and used contained Semper's assertion that the age-old pleasure in dressing and masking was identical to the impulse that made people artists, no matter what kind of art.[39] Arguing that both the creation and enjoyment of art presupposed a "Mardi Gras mood [*Faschingslaune*]," he observed that "the haze of carnival candles [*Karnivalskerzendunst*] is the true atmosphere of art,"[40] a striking phrase that Nietzsche recorded in his notes. Semper believed that true art required the denial of reality and materiality. The example he chose to illustrate this point explains the two distinct, but related, meanings of the word "mask" in his aesthetic theory. He described the sculptures of Phidias on the two tympana of the Parthenon as "stone dramas" presenting two mythic stories: the birth of Athena from the mind of Zeus and the struggle of Athena and Poseidon for the possession of Attica. In his treatment of his myths, Phidias's goal was to mask the masks. He masked the stone material used to create the individual figures, and the compositions as a whole functioned as masks in the sense of dramatic entertainments or masques. In his use of the physical material as well as the mythic material, Phidias "freed [*befreite*]" his subject from physical reality.[41] The dressed stone masked any material, nonemblematic manifestation of the gods' "religious symbolic essence" and the mythic masque conveyed their significance as an expression of "purely human beauty and greatness." Semper argues that when the great dramatists took up the tradition of the early material masques in a more spiritual way,

"the proscenium becomes a frame for depicting a sublime moment of human history that never even actually happened but which comes to pass everywhere as long as human hearts continue to beat."[42] The performance freed the audience from material reality as it contemplated the ideal essence of human nature.

In the part of Nietzsche's lecture that presented the crux of his theory about the origin and nature of Greek drama, he drew on Semper's ideas about masking, elements of Schopenhauer's philosophy, Wagner's work and a variety of other sources, but he infused these ideas with his own theory of how drama came into being and how it effected its audience. Those who attended the ancient Attic dramas had none of the jaded indifference Nietzsche saw in modern audiences. "In contrast, the soul of the Athenian who came to view the Greater Dionysia still contained something of that element out of which tragedy was born. It is this: the overpowering eruption of spring's germinating power, the jumbled feelings of tumult and frenzy that all primitive peoples and all nature know at the approach of spring."[43] The dramatic festival of the Greater Dionysia occurred in the spring and celebrated that season of rebirth, a rebirth tied to the mystery religion of Dionysus whose mythic story derived from the vegetative nature cycle of death in the fall and rebirth in the spring. Nietzsche's point echoes Semper's observation about the Mardi Gras mood presupposed in the creation and enjoyment of art. Nietzsche writes, "As everyone knows our masquerades [*Fastnachspiele*] and mummery [*Maskenscherze*] originate in these kinds of spring festivals…Here everything is deeply instinctual."[44] He goes on to compare the swarming trains of Dionysian revelers to the medieval St Vitas dancers who seemed caught up in a kind of mass hysteria.[45]

Turning to the earliest origins of drama, Nietzsche describes the emotional state of those who costumed themselves as satyrs, painted their faces with bright colors and engaged in the irrational behavior of these celebrating crowds. "The all-powerful impact of spring, which makes itself known so suddenly, also increases the vital forces of life here to such an excessive degree, that ecstatic states, visions and the belief in one's own enchantment appear everywhere…And this is the cradle of drama. It did not originate with people disguising themselves in order to delude others."[46] Nietzsche argues that in these celebrations the participants believe themselves enchanted; they experience an ecstasy that transports them out of themselves. In this process of transformation they do not return to themselves

but become one with the god Dionysus and act as his servants, the Bacchantes. Just as the participant believes in his transformation so the dramatic poet believes in the reality of his figures. Nietzsche advances the thesis that originally the drama had consisted only of a singing and dancing chorus of men dressed as satyrs and sileni. Their song focused the attention of the audience on the story of Dionysus's struggles and suffering. The drama involved no real action, but rather aimed at causing the members of the audience to feel the suffering of the god for themselves. Only later in the development of the drama did the figure of the god actually appear on stage; by providing a living image of Dionysus telling his own story the actor could heighten the emotional participation of the audience and draw it into oneness with the god.[47]

Music performed a vital role in this process of transformation and rebirth that lay at the heart of ancient Attic drama. "The music, then, is used throughout only as a means to an end: it was its task to recreate with the greatest intensity the suffering of the god and the hero in the listeners."[48] Nietzsche added that the words of the drama also had that task, but that they could accomplish it only with great difficulty in a roundabout way. Because words necessarily filtered the emotional impact through abstract concepts, they frequently failed to achieve their goal, whereas music spoke directly to the heart. In making this point, Nietzsche closely followed the beliefs of Schopenhauer and Wagner who linked words to the intellectual, phenomenal, world of causality and music to the underlying world of the will that manifested itself in individuals as passion and instinct. This reveals more fully the rationale for Nietzsche's argument that without knowledge of the musical component of ancient Greek drama, the surviving "librettos" failed to convey a crucial dimension of these works. The intended goal of the Greek musical drama could only be achieved through the unified impact of the words and the music in coordination with the other arts that contributed to the drama.

Nietzsche followed both Semper and Wagner in seeing the creation of a fully unified work of art by the ancient Greeks as the key to their artistic greatness and also to their achievement of a truly free art. He compared the difficulty of creating such a work to the challenges faced by an athlete competing in the pentathlon. The ancient dramatist had to excel as a poet, a composer, and an actor as well as in orchestration and direction. The kind of "freedom" enjoyed by modern dramatists "in choice of material, number of actors and countless other

things, would appear as a lack of discipline to the Attic art critic."[49] In contrast, Nietzsche observes, "Through the totality of Greek art there runs the proud law that only the most difficult is the business of the free man."[50] Here Nietzsche uses the word freedom in a way thoroughly consistent with the German tradition, seeing true freedom as necessarily linked to discipline and authority. True freedom accepted the constraints imposed by the task of drawing together very different art forms to produce a unified artistic experience.

Nietzsche concluded his lecture by arguing that the free "pentathlete" of the ancient musical drama set the standard for Greek art as a whole, and to drive home his point he once again drew on Semper's ideas about dressing [*Bekleidung*]. Semper employed the term dressing primarily to describe the many different techniques of masking and decoration, but he also used it in its most literal sense. In *Der Stil* he argued that the way the ancient Athenian dressed had undergone an important change during the great age of artistic creativity, a change first introduced by the dramas of Aeschylus. Before that time the Athenians had typically worn three articles of clothing closely derived from foreign sources, but the use of free drapery on the stage pulled together these forms of dress to produce a unified and distinctly new style. Semper writes that "this transition to free drapery was the result of a sudden perception and recognition of the artistically beautiful," which signaled a general advance of Greek culture after a period in which it had lagged behind its neighbors.[51] Nietzsche's notes show that he read Semper's discussion of clothing, and used it to reinforce his central point about the significance of the ancient Greek musical drama. Here again, as in his earlier reference to the polychrome theory, he sometimes follows Semper's text word for word.[52] He observes, "Aeschylus has extraordinary significance for the history of ancient clothing, in that he introduced free drapery, the elegance, splendor, and grace of the principal garment . . . The Greek musical drama provides that free drapery for the totality of ancient art: with it everything unfree, everything isolated in the individual arts, is overcome."[53] In this passage, Nietzsche draws together the freedom of ancient Greek art with that aspect of the German idea of freedom that finds freedom in the integral relationship of the parts to the whole, the idea explored in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, and subsequently echoed by Goethe, Semper, and Wagner.

In the final words of his lecture, Nietzsche related the scholarly issues he had discussed to the subject of art in his own time. Alluding

to the efforts of Semper and Wagner to create a modern art form that would realize the goal of a true unity of the arts, Nietzsche declared, "Whoever is reminded of the ideal of present day art reformers will immediately realize that the artwork of the future [*Kunstwerk der Zukunft*] is certainly not some sort of glittering but deceptive mirage: what we hope for the future, was once before reality—more than two thousand years ago."[54] The artwork of the future followed the example of the ancient Greeks in pointing the way to freedom through artistic wholeness, seeking to elevate the aesthetic observer to a spiritual realm unfettered by the causal chains of material reality.

IV

The belief held by both Semper and Wagner that freedom could be attained through an all-embracing aesthetic experience undoubtedly influenced the way Nietzsche developed his concept of the Greek musical drama in the months following his move to Basel, but during this time he also continued to maintain his interest in the idea of freedom as rebellion against unjust authority, the theme of his early drama "Prometheus." His manuscript notes from the beginning of his Basel period include one titled "Zeus im Prometheus," which recalls the issues of his adolescent play while anticipating the important discussion of Prometheus that he went on to include in the *Birth of Tragedy*. In the note, Nietzsche confines himself solely to the Greek text of Aeschylus's *Prometheus Unbound*, and he begins by asking if it is possible to move beyond the individual viewpoints of the various characters in the play to determine how Aeschylus himself saw the relationship between Prometheus and Zeus. Nietzsche points out that in the play, even though Prometheus objects to the severity of his punishment, he fully understands he is at fault with respect to Zeus. That Prometheus "acknowledges a freely-willed offense [*freiwilliges Vergehen*]," affirms his status as a symbol of freedom and rebellion against authority. The exact nature of the offense consists in helping "humanity against the will of Zeus."[55] Although Zeus intended to destroy humanity, Prometheus thwarts him and gives the human race all the gifts of civilization. But Prometheus believes that the severity of his own punishment and Zeus's use of human passions to confuse and mislead show the God's savagery and violence.

Nietzsche suggests that Aeschylus's play reveals the problematic position of humanity primarily through the character of Io. After

seducing Io, Zeus turns her into a cow to hide her from Hera, and in that humiliating form Io wanders the earth until she comes to Prometheus, who foretells her future torments and her ultimate release from them. Nietzsche concludes his note by observing that the contrast between Prometheus's high expectations for humanity and Io's example of its miserable reality sets the stage for the chorus to put forth its own, strongly traditional, quite conservative, ethical position. Referring to the "dreamlike feebleness by which the race of man is held in bondage, a blind prisoner," the chorus declares that "the plans of men shall never pass the ordered law of Zeus."[56] So the chorus fully accepts humanity's subservient position.

Nietzsche's note does not indicate whether or not he thinks the chorus represents Aeschylus's viewpoint, but the more extensive discussion of the play that he incorporates into the *Birth of Tragedy* some months later clearly reveals his belief that it does not. Referring to the "glory of action" that irradiates the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus, Nietzsche asserts that a passage from an earlier dramatization of the Prometheus story by Goethe conveys what Aeschylus actually meant to say, but left for his audience to draw from his symbolism.[57] In Goethe's play, Prometheus addresses Zeus with fierce defiance:

> Here I sit, shaping beings
> In my own image,
> A race like me,
> To suffer, to cry,
> To enjoy, to delight,
> And to ignore you
> As I do![58]

In quoting this passage, Nietzsche attributes to Aeschylus a vision of aspiring humanity elevated to a position of supreme autonomy: "Man, raised to titanic proportions, conquers his own civilization and compels the gods to join forces with him, since by his autonomous wisdom he commands both their existence and the limitations of their sway."[59] Humanity has made the freedom of Prometheus its own.

Nietzsche goes on to point out the paradoxical conjoining of what seems to be "a hymn in praise of impiety" with "a profound Aeschylean longing for *justice*."[60] The play simultaneously depicts the "immeasurable suffering of the bold individual" and the "need of the Gods [*göttliche Noth*] prefiguring a twilight of the gods [*Götterdämmerung*],"[61]

a set of themes that points to "a merger of their universes of suffering."[62] In using such terms as *Götterdämmerung* and *göttliche Noth* Nietzsche acknowledges that his intellectual allegiance to Wagner has guided his analysis of the drama from which the composer drew his theme of freedom versus authority in the *Ring*. Nietzsche has returned to the Greek sources of Wagner's conceptions with the aim of laying bare the philosophical underpinnings of the world view expressed in Greek tragedy and incorporating that world view into the Wagnerian crusade to reform art and society.

Nietzsche believed that the Aeschylean "longing for justice" pointed to a fundamental disjunction in the unity of things, a disjunction that provides the basis of Nietzsche's tragic vision. Nietzsche sees the great dramatic artists such as Aeschylus as the true bearers of the Promethean spirit. "The titanic artist was strong in his defiant belief that he could create men and, at the least, destroy Olympian gods; this he was able to do by virtue of his superior wisdom, which, to be sure, he must atone for by eternal suffering."[63] The insoluble conflict between humanity and the Olympians resulted from the human freedom inherent in the Promethean gift of fire. "The presupposition of the Prometheus myth is the extraordinary value that primitive humanity places on fire as the true palladium of every rising culture. But that man disposes of fire freely [*frei* ü*ber das Feuer waltet*], and not as a gift from heaven . . . seemed a crime to thoughtful primitive man, a theft of divine nature."[64] Here Nietzsche returns to the central issue raised in his adolescent drama about Prometheus, but, in contrast to that earlier treatment, he moves beyond the Christian framework of guilt, repentance, and redemption to affirm the heroic necessity of the crime and the tragic inevitability of the punishment. He argues that, "an exalted notion of active sin as the properly Promethean virtue . . . provides us with the ethical substratum of pessimistic tragedy."[65] For the adolescent Nietzsche, the guilt aroused by challenging the paternal authority of Zeus had to be expiated through contrition, but in the *Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche has come to see guilt as a measure of the human suffering inherent in the nature of reality. He believes that the myth of Prometheus implies a "contradiction at the center of the world," revealing itself as "an interpenetration of different worlds, divine and human, each individually in the right but each having to suffer for its individuality when they intersect."[66] So Aeschylus's affirmation of freedom and his longing for

justice implied the inescapable necessity of two conjoined worlds of suffering.[67]

In dealing with the issue of freedom, Nietzsche had to consider a number of diverse and sometimes conflicting influences that had shaped his thinking. The German cultural tradition, exemplified by Kant and Goethe, rejected ungoverned freedom as license and associated true freedom with authority. Nietzsche's familial situation pointed him in a different direction. The father–son theme of his adolescent drama about Prometheus suggests that he experienced the generational tension between authority and freedom in a way that left him torn between the piety of reconciliation and the heroism of conflict. Later, in his early college years, when he renounced his religious beliefs, he turned to Schopenhauer, whose philosophy allowed little scope for freedom in the phenomenal world of nature, but did maintain that art and ethics could provide the freedom to escape from that world. Later still, in the months before he began work on the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche allied himself intellectually with Wagner, whose ideas about freedom had undergone dramatic change and development. The theme of freedom in Wagner's *Ring*, a work Nietzsche knew intimately as editor of the final published version of the text, moved from an original emphasis on the ideal of free will and political freedom within the world of nature to the Schopenuauerian concept of freedom as escape from the world. By giving the myth of Prometheus a prominent place in *The Birth of Tragedy*, as signaled by the image on the title page and carried through in the body of the work, Nietzsche declared his intention to incorporate his ideas about freedom into the central themes of his book. In accomplishing this task, he redefined freedom in a way that contributed a key element to the development of his idea of self-overcoming.

The first step in this redefinition involved translating the key symbols and issues of the Prometheus myth into the Apollonian–Dionysian language of The *Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche does this by aligning Prometheus with Dionysus while associating the Olympian ideals of justice, order, and limits with Apollo. Focusing on the experience of the individual caught up in the ancient dramatic festivals, Nietzsche writes, "It is Apollo who tranquilizes the individual by drawing boundary lines, and who, by enjoining again and again the practice of self-knowledge, reminds him of the holy, universal norms."[68] Counterbalancing the danger of "Egyptian rigidity," inherent in this force, "the Dionysiac flood tide periodically destroys all the

little circles in which the Apollonian will would confine Hellenism. The swiftly rising Dionysiac tide then shoulders all the small individual wave crests, even as Prometheus' brother Atlas shouldered the world."[69] The arousal of the Dionysian force reopens the earlier contest between the Titans and the Olympians. "This titanic urge to be the Atlas of all individuals, to bear them on broad shoulders ever farther and higher, is the common bond between the Promethean and Dionysiac forces. In this respect the Aeschylean Prometheus appears as a Dionysiac mask, while in his deep hunger for justice Aeschylus reveals his paternal descent from Apollo, god of individuation and just boundaries."[70] So Nietzsche sees in Aeschylus's treatment of the Prometheus myth some of the same ambiguity he himself had expressed in his adolescent play: an affirmation of heroic rebellion and a filial commitment to the ideal of justice. But even while accepting the unbridgeable gap between these alternatives, Nietzsche also sees in the drama the operation of a dynamic that brought them into relationship with each other.

Nietzsche prepares the way for explaining this dynamic by using Schopenhauer's concept of individuation as a basis for analyzing the myth of Dionysus. Schopenhauer saw individuation as the source of the pain and tragedy that characterized human life. Although unified in itself, the will that lay at the heart of all reality took the form of completely separate beings in the phenomenal world of nature, because reason imposed on human experience the fragmenting categories of time space and causality. Imprisoned in this fully determined phenomenal world and deluded by egoistic self-interest, each individual pursued a life that rarely amounted to more than a war of all against all. Nietzsche believed that the mystery religion and the dramatic festivals honoring Dionysus expressed these basic truths in the mythic story of how the god was torn to pieces and then restored to life. The dismemberment of Dionysus symbolized the terrible pain that individuation and fragmentation inflicted on human existence, while the god's miraculous rebirth—achieved in a state of high emotion divorced from the operation of reason—represented the hope of overcoming that fragmentation. Nietzsche writes, "Every hope of the Eleusinian initiates pointed to a rebirth of Dionysos, which we can now interpret as meaning the end of individuation."[71] Nietzsche concluded that ancient tragedy and the mystery religions contained the essential components of a profound philosophy: "A recognition that whatever exists is of a piece, and that individuation is the

root of all evil; a conception of art as the sanguine hope that the spell of individuation may yet be broken, as an augury of eventual reintegration."[72] In what he hypothesized as the historical reality of ancient Greek art and religion, Nietzsche found confirmation for his Schopenhauerian beliefs in the tragic consequences of individuation and the possibility that art offered hope of redemption.

Nietzsche moved well beyond Schopenhauer, however, in his description of how art might serve as a vehicle to transcend the evils of individuation. Although the ideas about music and drama that Schopenhauer put forth in his extensive discussion of the arts in *The World as Will and Representation* contained much that Nietzsche enthusiastically embraced, they said nothing about musical drama as such, neither the ancient Greek musical drama on which Nietzsche focused his attention in the *Birth of Tragedy* nor the modern form created by Wagner. For Nietzsche, the key to understanding how musical drama could break "the spell of individuation" that ordinarily bound the members of the audience lay in the interaction between the music and the mythic world of the dramatic poetry. The emotional power of the music caused these separate individuals to lose hold of their particular identities as the singing and dancing chorus brought them into ecstatic union with the god, and at its height threatened to shatter their individuality altogether. But when the god appeared and spoke from the stage, his words and the Apollonian imagery of his mythic story re-engaged the rational faculty on which individual identity rested. The Apollonian world of form, balance, and individuation regained its hold, but it did so in a way that left the members of the audience in a transfigured state. Nietzsche provides his clearest explanation of this transfiguring experience when he applies his analysis of Greek tragedy to the work of Wagner toward the end of the *Birth of Tragedy*. He writes, "How is it possible for a man who has listened to the very heartbeat of the world-will and felt the unruly lust for life rush into all the veins of the world . . . to remain unshattered? . . . And yet the reception of such a work does not shatter the recipient, [or] the creation of it the creator. What are we to make of this contradiction?"[73] The answer lay in the role played by the mythic element of the musical drama: "It is at this point that the tragic myth and the tragic hero interpose between our highest musical excitement and the music, giving us a parable of those cosmic facts of which music alone can speak directly . . . [T]he Apollonian power, bent upon reconstituting

the nearly shattered individual, asserts itself, proffering the balm of a delightful illusion."[74] But this re-assertion of the Apollonian element does not constitute the essence of the experience: "At the point that matters most the Apollonian illusion has been broken through and destroyed . . . [A]t its close the Apollonian drama is projected into a sphere where it begins to speak with Dionysiac wisdom, thereby denying itself and its Apollonian concreteness."[75] The participants in the dramatic festivals re-enter their Apollonian world of form and individuation endowed with a Dionysian sense of the unity underlying the world of fragmentation. The experience of identifying with the god, and the tragic hero through whom he spoke, allowed the members of the audience to surmount the tragedy of individuation. Focusing on the reaction of the aesthetic observer, Nietzsche writes, "He will not have felt that justification of the individuated world which is the essence of Apollonian art. He will have beheld the transfigured world of the stage and yet denied it, seen before him the tragic hero in epic clarity and beauty and yet rejoiced at his destruction."[76]

The destruction of the tragic hero in the mythic Apollonian element of the musical drama paralleled the near shattering of the individual brought about by the musical, Dionysian component. The myth conveyed the tragedy inherent in the individuated world and instilled an acceptance of that tragic view in the aesthetic observer: "He will have considered the actions of the hero justified and yet felt an even greater exaltation when these very actions brought about his destruction. He will have shuddered at the sufferings about to befall the hero and yet divined in them a higher, overmastering joy."[77] Paradoxically, the mythic element of the musical drama—despite its Apollonian form—allowed the aesthetic observer to transcend the Apollonian world of appearances while continuing to live in it. As Nietzsche explains, "To understand tragic myth we must see it as Dionysian wisdom made concrete through Apollonian artifice. In that myth the world of appearances is pushed to its limits where it denies itself and seeks to escape back into the world of primordial reality."[78] By experiencing the necessity of self-dissolution—denial of the individuated self—the aesthetic observer gained freedom from the causal web that enmeshed the world of nature.

Although this idea of freedom from material reality seems at odds with the concept of political freedom expressed as defiance of authority, Nietzsche had forged a relationship between these ideas in the

earlier parts of *The Birth of Tragedy* where he discussed the origins of the Greek musical drama. He constructed a mytho-historical link that tied the rebellious freedom of Prometheus and the Titans to the dynamic of self-dissolution and renewal that underpinned his concept of self-overcoming. Nietzsche described the epic myths of the Homeric era as a victory song celebrating the triumph of Olympian culture over the elemental forces of nature represented by the Titans. In the centuries that followed, however, as the Homeric myths came to subserve the needs of tragic poetry, it became apparent that "in the interim Olympian culture too had been superseded by an even deeper philosophy."[79] Aeschylus's play *Prometheus* marked this shift: "The contumacious Titan, Prometheus, now announced to his Olympian tormentor that unless the latter promptly joined forces with him, his reign would be in supreme danger. In the work of Aeschylus we recognize the alliance of the Titan with a frightened Zeus in terror of his end."[80] Nietzsche interpreted this reversal of fortune as a return of the repressed forces of nature. "Thus we find the earlier age of Titans brought back from Tartarus and restored to the light of day. A philosophy of wild, naked nature looks with the bold countenance of truth upon the flitting myths of the Homeric world." Aeschylus, the Dionysian artist, presses the mythic world into the service of the newly liberated forces of nature; Prometheus regains his freedom and imposes limits on the authority of Olympian Zeus. In framing his explanation of this revolutionary change, Nietzsche asks, "What power was it that freed [*befreite*] Prometheus from his vulture, and transformed myth into a vehicle of Dionysian wisdom? It was the Hercules-like power of music."[81]

In these passages, Nietzsche aligns Promethean freedom with the liberating power of music while simultaneously juxtaposing freedom to the Olympian world of authority and music to the form-giving power of myth. But what had been static opposition in Nietzsche's adolescent drama has given way to dynamic interaction in *The Birth of Tragedy*. In each pairing of opposing forces ungoverned freedom confronts restriction, but in the later work Nietzsche reinterprets the German tradition of freedom by linking freedom and authority to successive phases of the artistic experience produced by the dramatic festivals. Nietzsche provides few details about how this dynamic synthesis of freedom and authority would enter into the ongoing lives of those who came to accept the tragic view of reality; he would explore that subject in later works. But he does indicate that his new

conception of freedom led back into life rather than away from it. The individuals of the tragic culture he envisioned would celebrate the power and freedom of a heroic existence.

Nietzsche saw Siegfried, the free hero of Wagner's *Ring*, as the inspiring ideal of this new culture. He writes, "Imagine a rising generation with undaunted vision, with a heroic drive toward the infinite; imagine the bold tread of these dragon slayers, the proud disdain with which they turn their backs on all the enfeebling doctrines of optimism in order to lead the resolute life fully and completely."[82] After explaining how Kant and Schopenhauer had prepared the way for this new era by undermining the false optimism of scientific rationalism, Nietzsche goes on to argue that "the tragic individual of this culture," in his self-fashioning (*Selbsterziehung*) would desire and need "a new art, the art of metaphysical solace: tragedy."[83] In using the term *Selbsterziehung*—literally, "self-rearing"—Nietzsche brings into his description of this new generation of free heroes the motive force of human volition, a key element in his emerging idea of self-overcoming. Nietzsche had ended his play, *Prometheus*, with powerful images of rebirth, but that rebirth resulted from guilt, atonement, and divine grace. The will of the gods provided the primary motive force in this process. In the early parts of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche described how the interaction of the Dionysian and Apollonian forces in the musical dramas of ancient Greece produced an experience of transfiguration and rebirth in the members of the audience, but in and of itself this process placed little emphasis on the volition of the participants. Only when Nietzsche moves on in the later parts of his book to focus attention on the actions of the tragic individual shaped by this process does his new emphasis on human volition emerge clearly. The new Siegfrieds would educate themselves, free from the influences of the existing society.

For Nietzsche this transformation on the individual level closely paralleled what he foresaw for German culture as a whole as it emerged from a long period of foreign domination. He believed that "for the German spirit the birth of a tragic age only means a return to itself, a blessed rediscovery of itself after powerful external forces had, for a long period of time, pressed inward . . . to force it into servitude . . . Now finally, after its return to the original source of its being, it dares to stride forth, bold and free, before all nations, without the leading strings of a Latin civilization."[84] Nietzsche compared the German spirit to a knight who has long been asleep in some inaccessible abyss:

"One day he will find himself awake, with all the morning freshness of a deep slumber; then he will slay dragons, destroy the cunning dwarfs, and awaken Brünnhilde—and not even Wotan's spear will be able to bar his way."[85] The old world of static authority would yield to the dynamic power of the free hero.

V

In the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche introduced the concept of *Selbsterziehung* as an ideal motivating those who saw Siegfried as the model for a new generation of free heroes, but that concept remained to be defined and elaborated in a broader context that would reach beyond the devotees of the artwork of the future. Nietzsche accomplished that task in the *Untimely Observations*. All four of those essays explored the tensions between the dominant values of Nietzsche's time and the ideals he wanted to foster in the rising generation on which he placed his hopes. In the third, *Schopenhauer as Educator*, he examined the figure who had most inspired his own personal and intellectual development, and by examining the psychological dynamics at work in his intellectual encounter with Schopenhauer, he derived the principles he would elaborate into a general philosophy of self-overcoming. The concept of freedom Nietzsche incorporated into his idea of self-overcoming followed the German tradition associating freedom with authority while also giving that tradition a unique form of expression. It simultaneously echoed and transformed Goethe's conception of aristocratic freedom, and it pointed the spiritual freedom that Semper and Wagner associated with transcendence of material reality in a radically different direction.

Nietzsche begins *Schopenhauer as Educator* by appealing to the youth of his time to be themselves and assert their freedom: "Every youthful soul hears this call day and night and trembles when he hears it; for the idea of its liberation [*Befreiung*] gives it a presentment of the measure of happiness allotted it from all eternity—a happiness to which it can by no means attain so long as it lies fettered by the chains of fear and convention."[86] Convinced that his own era, with its slavish devotion to public opinion, would be "struck out of the history of the true liberation of life," Nietzsche proclaimed his belief that, "We are responsible to ourselves for our own existence; consequently we want to be the true helmsman of this existence and refuse to allow our existence to resemble a mindless act of chance."[87]

Nietzsche held out the hope that the youth of the rising generation would confront all the powerful influences, and conflicting demands of the time with a determined effort to break free of their control: "I will make an attempt to attain freedom the youthful soul says to itself."[88] But where would that inexperienced and impressionable young soul find the strength and inspiration to accomplish this task?

The answer to this question brought Nietzsche to the heart of his concept of self-overcoming. Drawing on his own experience as a young man, he asked the "young soul" to look to those figures in its life who had inspired it to become more than itself: "Let the youthful soul look back on life with the question: what have you truly loved up to now, what has drawn your soul aloft, what has mastered it and at the same time blessed it? Set up these revered objects before you and perhaps their nature will give you a law, the fundamental law of your own true self."[89] The law discovered in this way dictated a process that led the individual to the only true freedom. Nietzsche continues, "Compare these objects one with another, see how one completes, expands, surpasses, transfigures another, how they constitute a stepladder upon which you have clambered up to yourself as you are now."[90] This step-by-step ascension, involving admiration, love, and identification, provided the basic dynamic that drove forward the process of self-overcoming.

Nietzsche's firm grounding in the German tradition of freedom can be seen in the way his linkage of freedom to self-overcoming echoes Goethe's early nineteenth-century conception of aristocratic freedom. For Goethe freedom involved acknowledging one's inherited place in the social hierarchy and affirming the guiding authority of the higher orders. In one of his conversations with Eckermann, Goethe observed, "We are not made free by the desire to acknowledge nothing as being above us, but rather by honoring something that is above us. For when we honor it we raise ourselves up to it and manifest through our recognition that we ourselves bear the higher within us and are worthy of being equal to it."[91] Nietzsche's conception of freedom replaces Goethe's traditional aristocracy with a self-creating aristocracy of the spirit that cuts itself free of the dominating influences of the time to affirm a higher order of culture. As Nietzsche observes, "your educators [*Erzieher*] can be nothing but your liberators [*Befreier*]."[92] "And that is the secret of all culture . . . Culture is liberation [*Befreiung*]."[93]

The word that Nietzsche uses for the inspiring figure to whom the young soul would look in lifting itself to some higher plane of culture, the word *Erzieher*, cannot adequately be conveyed by the usual translation, "educator". The verb *erziehen* means "to rear," as a parent would rear a child, and the word "educator" lacks that parental connotation. For Nietzsche, that dimension of the word's meaning held particular importance. Nietzsche's psychological relationship with his father had figured prominently in his earlier treatments of freedom and authority, and it manifested itself with particular clarity in the concept of freedom as self-overcoming that he developed in *Schopenhauer as Educator*. In describing his encounter with Schopenhauer, Nietzsche referred to the fatherly tone of instruction he found in Schopenhauer's writings, but he also observed that, "I had discovered him only in the form of a book, and that was a great deficiency. So I strove all the harder to see through the book and to imagine the living man whose great testament I had to read and who promised to make his heirs only those who would and could be more than merely his readers: namely his sons and pupils."[94] In describing the path to freedom for the young souls he himself sought to instruct, the model Nietzsche put forth for his readers to follow was the key experience in his own self-transformation, the experience of incorporating the guiding authority and wisdom of a loving father figure.

The theme of the good father runs through Nietzsche's description of Schopenhauer's life, as he explains how, despite growing up with a "vain and culturally pretentious mother," he was saved from her by the "proud, free, republican character of his father."[95] Nietzsche makes Schopenhauer's mother a symbol of all the ensnaring influences of those prevailing cultural and intellectual values against which a true genius struggled to attain freedom: "Schopenhauer strove from his early youth against that false, idle and unworthy mother, his age, and by, as it were expelling her from him, he healed and purified his being and rediscovered himself."[96] Schopenhauer's father also left his son an inheritance that allowed him to devote his life to philosophy without ever having to earn a living, and this furthered his ability to free himself from the entanglements of the material, phenomenal world. So directly, by providing a model for the development of a free and independent character, and indirectly by leaving his son the means to lead a life devoted to thought, Schopenhauer's father provided his son with the ideal conditions for developing his

genius—"in short, freedom and again freedom: that wonderful and perilous element in which the Greek philosophers were able to grow up."[97] In describing the life circumstances that allowed Schopenhauer to express his genius, Nietzsche accomplished an important part of his task of showing how such a great thinker could serve as an inspiring ideal for self-transformation. But as he went on to explain, the harder part of his task remained.

In addition to a picture of the ideal man, it was essential to show, "how a new circle of duties may be derived from this ideal and how one can proceed toward so extravagant a goal through a practical activity—in short to demonstrate that this ideal *educates* [*erzieht*]."[98] Nietzsche's reference to a "circle of duties" recalls his statement at the beginning of his essay that if the youthful soul looked back and considered what had elevated and drawn its spirit aloft it might discover the "fundamental law" of its own true self.[99] These references to duties and to law introduce the key element of authority into the process of self-overcoming that built on and expanded the freedom of the young souls to whom Nietzsche addressed his words. Here, Nietzsche clearly echoes the German idea of freedom, as best exemplified in Kant's argument that true freedom becomes possible through the individual's self-imposition of the moral law. Acknowledging the difficulties in trying to move from an ideal image of genius, such as the one he had found in Schopenhauer, to implementing the process of self-transformation, Nietzsche declares, "from my own experience I am certain of only one thing: that from that ideal image it is possible to fasten upon ourselves a chain of fulfillable duties," and he promises to go on to "reduce this new circle of duties to a formula."[100] Although the circle of duties Nietzsche eventually formulates for his readers differs profoundly from Kant's rational categorical imperatives, the image of fastening on oneself a chain connecting the ideal image to those duties conveys the same idea of a self-imposed law.

The formula for self-overcoming that Nietzsche propounds requires the individual to move beyond the limits of self-isolation to embrace participation in a broad cultural community. He argues that even though "philosophy offers an asylum to a man into which no tyranny can force its way," this inner freedom does not suffice. "These people who have fled inward for their freedom also have to live outwardly, become visible, let themselves be seen; they are united with mankind through countless ties."[101] The individual could begin to actualize this unity by assuming the duties inherent in a common

dedication to the idea of culture. "One thing above all is certain: these new duties are not the duties of a solitary; on the contrary, they set one in the midst of a mighty community held together, not by external forms and regulations, but by a fundamental idea. It is the fundamental idea of culture."[102] This all-embracing concept of culture required each individual to strive toward one vitally important goal: "*to promote the production of the philosopher, the artist and the saint within us and without us and thereby to work at the perfecting of nature.*"[103] In pointing to these three ideal types, Nietzsche echoed the philosophy of Schopenhauer, who had argued that it was possible to overcome the driving domination of the will to live through philosophic understanding of the true nature of reality and the will, through aesthetic suspension of the will, or through ascetic denial of the will.

Even while employing the ideas of the philosopher who had so inspired him, Nietzsche went on to depart from those ideas when he came to the central point of his *Schopenhauer as Educator*. Where Schopenhauer's ideas pointed the way to an escape from the tragic pain of existence, Nietzsche's transformation of those ideas affirmed the necessity of overcoming the tragedy of life and returning to it with a powerful sense of affirmation and renewal. Nietzsche argued that the duties linking the ideal images of the philosopher, the artist, and the saint to the process of self-transformation were part of consecrating oneself to culture, and this "consecration" involved different stages. As Nietzsche explains, "he who has attached his heart to some great man is by that act *consecrated to culture*; the sign of that consecration is that one is ashamed of oneself without any accompanying feeling of distress, that one comes to hate one's own narrowness and shriveled nature."[104] It is from this narrowness that one frees oneself in the process of self-overcoming by rejecting the external, conformist, influences of one's time and freely choosing to model oneself on some higher image of humanity. Doing this constituted the first sign of one's consecration to culture, but as Nietzsche observed, "now, however, I have to describe the *further* stage of this consecration, and I realize that here my task is more difficult. For now we have to make the transition from the inward event to an assessment of the outward event; the eye has to be directed outwards so as to rediscover in the great world of action that desire for culture."[105] This means that, "the individual has to employ his own wrestling and longing as the alphabet by means of which he can now read off the aspirations of

mankind as a whole." Beyond that stage, "he has to climb up to a yet higher one; culture requires of him, not only inward experience, not only an assessment of the outer world that streams all around him, but finally and above all an act, that is to say a struggle on behalf of culture and hostility toward those influences, habits, laws, institutions in which he fails to recognize his goal: which is the production of genius."[106]

The alternatives Schopenhauer offered to the destructive pursuit of the will to live—self-transcendence through art and disengagement through self-denial—became, for Nietzsche, the first stages in the ascent to something higher. Art allowed the individual to experience a higher reality, and that experience strengthened the individual in its inner struggle to destroy those elements of the self that subjected it to the conformist influences of the time. Taking the image of some great person as an ideal model inspired the individual to root out those elements of himself that were not in conformity with the higher aspirations provided by the model. This work of self- overcoming, involving destruction of one's weaker nature, consecration to a higher realm of culture and action taken with like-minded individuals to actualize that higher realm in the real world of action constituted a path to freedom.

Nietzsche used the phrase "the path to freedom [*Der Weg zur Freiheit*]" as the title of one of the manuscript notes he wrote in 1873 while organizing the material that he would present in his *Untimely Observations*, and the note suggests a progression of stages in the achievement of freedom that parallels the process of self-overcoming set out in *Schopenhauer as Educator*. In its entirety, the note reads: "The Path to Freedom. Thirteenth Untimely. stage of observation. confusion. hatred. contempt. the bond [*Verknűpfung*]. enlightenment. illumination. the fight for. on inner peace and mental freedom [*Freisinn*]. attempts at construction. historical classification. political classification. the friends."[107] Although the terse nature of the note does not allow for a full explanation of Nietzsche's thinking, the broad outline of its meaning is clear enough when set against the central points of *Schopenhauer as Educator*. The first four terms, observation, confusion, hatred, and contempt, describe the beginning of the path to freedom where the individual examines himself in relation to the world and feels loathing at the way it has been corrupted by the debasing influences of its time. The fifth term, *Verknűpfung*, marks the turning point in the progression. Literally meaning "a tying together" it conveys

the idea of a psychological bonding of the individual with the inspiring image of some great figure, such as Schopenhauer in Nietzsche's case. The following four terms or phrases describe the inner consequences of that bonding as the individual comes to an understanding of the struggle to free himself from external influences and achieves autonomy and inner peace. The final set of phrases moves the issue of freedom and self-overcoming out into the world, putting it in historical and political perspective and suggesting ways that the individual could construct relationships with like-minded individuals (the friends) to further the realization of a higher realm of culture. The note provides strong evidence that for Nietzsche the process of self-overcoming and the path to freedom were essentially one and the same.

Another of Nietzsche's manuscript notes from this period provides insight into the way this close association of self-overcoming with freedom later became imbedded in one of Nietzsche's most influential concepts. The note reveals a close link between the ideas of *Schopenhauer as Educator* and the term "free spirit," which Nietzsche used frequently in his later writings. In this note, written in the first half of 1874, he says of Schopenhauer, "He is the liberating destroyer. The free spirit [*Freigeist*]."[108] Schopenhauer set out to destroy many of the most firmly held beliefs of his time and, thereby, liberate people from their influence. The process of weeding out and destroying the elements of the self binding the individual to past or current values that inhibited creativity led to rebirth as a free spirit, an idea that would prove highly attractive to the "young souls" to whom Nietzsche addressed his words.

In the late 1870s a student society at the University of Vienna became deeply interested in Nietzsche's ideas and began holding discussions and lectures devoted to disseminating his philosophy. One of the students who participated enthusiastically in those activities was a young medical student named Josef Paneth, and a number of years later he made Nietzsche's acquaintance while traveling in Switzerland. After calling on the philosopher to pay his respects, they struck up a brief friendship, and Paneth returned a number of times for conversations on a variety of topics. In one of these, which Paneth described in a letter to his fiancée, the discussion turned to the subject of anti-Semitism and Paneth's Jewish background. Paneth reported that Nietzsche rejected anti-Semitism and asked Paneth about the ideals and hopes cherished by Jews. Paneth replied that,

"I then mentioned that the Jews who thought as I did had lost their Jewish traditions; that for me the fact that I had worked in Brűcke's laboratory was more influential than my Jewishness." Nietzsche then responded by observing, "Yes, but these spirits who have disengaged themselves from everything are dangerous and pernicious." And when Paneth replied, "They are free spirits in your sense of the term," Nietzsche responded, "Yes, but free spirits are dangerous and pernicious." For Nietzsche, of course, the terms "dangerous" and "pernicious" had a strongly positive meaning when applied to those seeking to overthrow the conformist values of his time.

The conversation then moved on from the topic of free spirits to the underlying meaning of freedom, and Paneth's account offers important evidence of the close relationship between Nietzsche's ideas and the traditional German conception of freedom. Paneth observed, "At first one is as one can be, not as one should be or as one might like to be; once one is free one cannot tie oneself to a post without hypocrisy. To be free means being free from the traditional and the conventional; each individual will then examine what interests and powers within himself are enduring ones and will bind and give laws to himself accordingly." Someone without these inner powers could not be helped: "he flutters away. All of this applies to the ethical as well as the intellectual. And thus a free spirit possesses a powerful will to live." Paneth reported that Nietzsche, "appeared to agree with all of this,"[109] rejoicing that he had come to a clear understanding of the master's views on this crucial subject.

Nietzsche's ideas proved to be extremely attractive to the younger generation of intellectuals to which Paneth belonged and to those that followed. His call for self-overcoming and liberation from the values of bourgeois culture had a profound impact on the widest possible range of intellectual and artistic activities from philosophy to literature to music to politics. In Nietzsche's concept of self-overcoming the otherworldly element of the idea of freedom that became so pronounced in Wagner's *Ring* turned on itself to re-enter the world as a powerful activist force for change, and while accepting the tragedy of life laid the basis for an existential affirmation of existence.

5

From Self-Denial to Political Freedom: The Odyssey of Thomas Mann

By the end of the nineteenth century, the tradition Leonard Krieger described as the "German idea of freedom" had lost much of it former coherence. As some of the century's greatest artists and thinkers responded to the changing conditions of their time to adapt and give expression to their conception of freedom in such varied creative activities as poetry, architecture, music, and philosophy, the tradition became ever more differentiated and complex. Thomas Mann absorbed this multifaceted tradition in all its complexity. From his early years as an enthusiastic supporter of German cultural nationalism to the final decades of his life, he drew on this tradition to express some of the most important themes of his novels, short stories, and essays. As he explored and adapted the meaning of German freedom over the course of his long and eventful life, his interpretation of it evolved from seeing freedom primarily as an escape from life, as Schopenhauer and Wagner had done, to an increasing acceptance of Nietzsche's existential, freely chosen affirmation of life. And then, in the aftermath of World War I, he moved beyond Nietzsche's apolitical stance to plunge into the world of political engagement, using all the force of his powerful intellect and personality to oppose the rise of the Nazi movement.

With respect to art and politics the trajectory of Mann's career moved in the opposite direction to that of Wagner. During the long period that he worked on *The Ring*, Wagner began with a strong commitment to the radical political views that motivated his involvement in the revolutions of 1848–49, and he gave those views clear expression in *Das Rheingold*, with its strong emphasis on social injustice, political freedom, and freedom on the will. With the crushing defeat

of those revolutions and the resulting collapse of Wagner's career as a conductor, he abandoned his faith in political freedom and restricted the meaning of freedom of the will to a freedom to choose artistic transcendence of the material world, a transcendence expressed in *Götterdämmerung*. Mann began his writing career under the spell of Wagner's artistic vision. His early short stories and his first novel, *Buddenbrooks*, developed Wagnerian themes in various ways, sometimes with high seriousness, sometimes with ironic detachment, but he fully shared Wager's belief in the superiority of an aesthetic rather than a political approach to life. For Mann, as for Wagner, the aesthetic represented the possibility of ascending to a holistic, spiritual realm remote from the divisive, interest-driven world of political struggle. Mann's enthusiastic embrace of Schopenhauer's philosophy, which occurred in 1899 when he was completing *Buddenbrooks*, further reinforced this point of view. During the years between the turn of the century and the outbreak of World War I, Mann made Nietzsche the third guiding star in his intellectual firmament. In *Death in Venice* he evoked the Greek world of Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, presenting Apollonian/Dionysian interaction as the source of artistic beauty. Mann's interest in Greek culture as a model for artistic and intellectual greatness continued from this time forward but it was only in the aftermath of World War I that he fully embraced the ideal of the tragic affirmation of life that Nietzsche saw as the essence of Greek culture.

The Great War profoundly altered Mann's perspective on art and politics, convincing him that disengagement from political activity put at risk the cultural ideals he held dear. This change in perspective also brought with it a reconsideration of the meaning and importance of freedom. Without abandoning his long-standing faith in the metaphysical primacy of art, he made his peace with the Western European political values he had long opposed. During the 1920s, the politics of psychological manipulation leading to the victory of fascism in Italy and the rise of the Nazi movement in Germany raised the issues of political freedom and freedom of the will with a new urgency that Mann could not ignore. In his short story, *Mario and the Magician* (1929) he presented the struggle to assert freedom of the will with deep sympathy, and in this and subsequent works he sought to reconcile the German tradition of aristocratic freedom with the Western European conceptions of political freedom and free will. In the various political essays he wrote in the 1930s and during

World War II, when he actively supported the allied war effort, he sought to strengthen the cause of freedom and democracy by infusing it with the self-elevating principle that he believed to be inherent in aristocratic freedom. In Mann's final political works, the German tradition of freedom, which had taken flight from reality in the music of Wagner, returned to earth and joined in the battle against the cultural barbarism that threatened to overwhelm the Western world.

I

In *Buddenbrooks*, Mann brought alive the world of his youth, describing its social, intellectual, and cultural moorings in intricate detail, and this work lays the foundation for understanding the many different aspects of the German tradition of freedom that he explores in this and his later writings. In the turn-of-the-century period when his outlook was shaped by the values of the German *Ständestaat*, with its strong emphasis on social status and upper class privilege, the patrician heritage of his family and city shaped his belief in an aristocratic conception of freedom strongly imbued with a sense of hierarchy and sharply at odds with Western European liberal ideals. For Mann, the conception of freedom developed within the German cultural tradition expressed social, political, and religious conditions quite different from those of Western Europe, and in *Buddenbrooks* he first elaborates a thorough critique of those Western European concepts of freedom and then goes on to present what he sees as the more genuine forms of freedom native to the German tradition. The positive forms of freedom Mann develops in *Buddenbrooks* include the freedom of self-denial, the freedom of transcendence through art, the freedom of irony, and the freedom bestowed by authority and power. Each of these interrelated aspects of German freedom provides a starting point for a process of elaboration and adaptation that continued over the whole course of Mann's life.

In *Buddenbrooks*, the struggle for political freedom takes place largely in the historical background against which Mann presents the decline of the Buddenbrook family, while the issues of free will and determinism play a prominent role in the unfolding story of the family. Since Mann transferred so much of the history of his own family and time into the events of *Buddenbrooks*, the novel provides valuable insight into the historical conditions that shaped his early views on the idea of freedom. The changing socioeconomic conditions that

precipitate the family's decline reflected the process of modernization that Germany experienced during the years of Mann's youth. Many Germans saw the Western European ideals of freedom and democracy as integral parts of that modernization, but to a cultural conservative such as Mann the popular appeal of these Western ideals, as well as what he saw as a blind faith in progress, posed a danger to highly valued German traditions. In his novel Mann initially presents these ideals in an attractive light that renders them all the more suspect when they later prove illusory. In contrast to these illusions of freedom, Mann then goes on to explore the German idea of freedom in several different, though interrelated, forms: the freedom of self-denial, the freedom of art, and the freedom of irony.

Mann develops the issues of freedom and determinism most pointedly in *Buddenbrooks* through the story of Tony Buddenbrook's conflict with her parents over their desire that she marry Bendix Grünlich, a business acquaintance of her father. Tony's attempt to avoid the marriage by withholding her consent raises the question of her freedom of choice. For her parents, the prestige Tony's marriage would bring to the family and its grain firm merges imperceptibly with their desire that their daughter continue to enjoy a comfortable life. Tony's pride in her family makes her vulnerable to the efforts to change her mind, and these persuasive forces are reinforced by those of the tightly-knit society to which the family belongs. One Sunday, as she sits in church, she suddenly realizes that the pastor's sermon "about the wife leaving father and mother and cleaving only to her husband" represented "a new attack upon her." He declares that, "A young, a still childish girl…could have as yet no will of her own and no wisdom of her own."[1] The words "no will of her own (*keinen eigenen Willen*)" emphasize the issue of freedom of the will as Tony faces mounting pressures to conform to her parents' choice.

In the face of Tony's continuing resistance, her parents send her on a vacation to a nearby resort where they hope she will gain the necessary perspective to agree to their wishes. This episode allows Mann to associate the question of freedom of the will with the issue of political freedom as related elements of the liberal tradition, for while on vacation Tony meets and falls in love with Morten Schwarzkopf, a medical student whose political radicalism embraces the full range of liberal ideals. In contrast to the distasteful prospect of the arranged marriage to Grünlich, Tony now sees the possibility of a marriage in accord with her own wishes.

Mann presents Morten Schwarzkopf as a handsome young man full of the radical political hopes that inspired German university students in the years immediately before the revolutions of 1848. He reads the *Rheinische Zeitung*, the newspaper Karl Marx edited in the early 1840s, and he belongs to a *Burschenschaft*, one of the outlawed student fraternities that espoused the ideals of German unity and political reform.[2] When he explains his political views to Tony, Morton echoes the ideals of the French revolution. He identifies himself as a member of "the bourgeoisie," and in using the French word *bourgeoisie*[3] he associates himself with those Western political values that Mann so distrusted. Morton tells Tony, "We don't recognize this lazy nobility we now have, we reject our present class hierarchy."[4] Above all, Morton believes in freedom: "We want freedom of the press, of employment, of commerce. We want all men to compete without any special privileges, and the only crown should be the crown of merit."[5] Confused by Morten's antagonism toward the aristocracy, Tony asks him what he wants, and he answers: "'We want freedom,' Morten said. 'Freedom?' she asked. 'Yes, freedom, you know—freedom,' he repeated, gesturing somewhat awkwardly but enthusiastically toward the sea."[6] Tony's political naiveté prevents her from grasping the real substance of Morten's political ideals, but her feelings for him convince her that she shares his belief in freedom. "Tony suddenly felt herself united with Morten in a great, vague, yearning, intuitive understanding of what 'freedom' meant."[7] In an attempt to exercise her newly discovered freedom Tony then informs her parents by letter that she has chosen to marry Morten rather than Grünlich.

Tony's apparent freedom of choice soon reveals itself as an illusion. The vast social and economic gulf separating Morton, the son of a sea captain, from the patrician social sphere in which Tony moved, asserts its reality when Grünlich and Tony's parents join with Morten's father to prevent the marriage. When Consul Buddenbrook writes back to his daughter to discourage her involvement with Morten, he emphasizes the binding nature of social and familial tradition, declaring that, "we are not free [*lose*] independent, self-subsisting individuals, but are like links in a chain; and it is inconceivable that we should be what we are without those who have preceded us."[8] When Tony returns home her opposition to her parents' wishes soon yields to pride in her family tradition. Before long she cheerfully comes to accept her father's view that, "as a link in that chain,

she had a higher, more responsible importance,"[9] and she decides to marry Grünlich.

Subsequently, as a married woman, Tony adopts her father's outlook on these matters: "Given her pronounced sense of family, any notion of free will [*Begriffen des freien Willens*] or self-determination was alien to her, so that she knew and could acknowledge the traits of her character with almost fatalistic equanimity."[10] The fact that Tony's marriage to Grünlich proves a disaster, not only for her personally, but also for the prestige of the Buddenbrook family and firm, casts an ironic light on Tony's brief effort to assert her dream of freedom against the chains of tradition. While presenting Tony's freedom of choice as an illusion, Mann also shows the tragedy inherent in the determining forces of business and social relationships.

Mann adds a further ironic twist to the issue of free will when he describes the break-up of Tony's marriage. After realizing that Grünlich had only married Tony for her dowry, in a vain attempt to ward off bankruptcy, the consul faces agonizing choices. If he provides the enormous sums needed to rescue his dishonest son-in-law he would reward dishonesty and endanger the financial security of his own firm, but if he allows Grünlich to go under, his daughter could also suffer greatly. He decides that if she has come to love her husband he will provide the necessary funds, but if not, he will cut his losses and urge her to get a divorce. So he presents the matter to Tony in a way that seems to give her the choice. Tony later recalls this situation as a proud moment in her life when her father, "had put the decision in her hands."[11] But in fact he did not. Although genuinely concerned for his daughter, the consul half-consciously maneuvers her to choose the option of divorce, which will save the family and firm great sums of money. Here again Tony's sense of free choice is an illusion, behind which the psychological pressures of her father's business interests and his parental concerns interact to determine the outcome.

The hopes for political freedom that Mann links to the issue of free will through Tony's encounter with Morten also prove illusory. They met during the period of political unrest that culminated in the 1848 revolutions, and when Morten tells Tony about the radical views of his fellow students, she asks him, with some alarm, "Have you all sworn to overturn the nobility?"[12] For liberals such as Morten freedom meant not only freedom of the press and freedom of trade, but also freedom from the weight of tradition embodied in a

privileged aristocracy. As Morten declares, "we want all men to be free and equal, for no one to be someone else's subject, but for all to be subject to the law. There should be an end of privileges and arbitrary power."[13] Morten's political views gain intensity from his awareness that his freedom to marry Tony also depends on overcoming the barriers of the hierarchical system. He points out that she sympathizes with the nobility because, "you're an aristocrat yourself . . . Your father is a great sovereign, and you are a princess."[14] Although not part of the landed aristocracy, Tony's family belongs to the urban patriciate that had ruled her native city for centuries, and its hierarchical order proves as resistant to the demands for revolutionary political change as to Tony's hope that she could marry Morten.

In portraying the revolutionary activity of 1848 in his novel, Mann built on the actual events that occurred in his native Lübeck, then a self-governing city state within the German confederation. Early in 1848, after the revolutionary outbreaks in Vienna and Berlin, Lübeck's ruling senate, long controlled by a few leading families, decreed a new constitution that somewhat widened participation in the political process. Although the new constitution calmed the political unrest for a time, demands for universal and equal manhood suffrage became increasingly strong over the summer, and this set the stage for the revolutionary outbreak, which occurred in October.[15] Mann alludes to these events in his novel, and at times he includes specific scenes and bits of speeches from the historical record as part of his collage technique of combining fiction with historical reality.

The day of the outbreak finds Consul Buddenbrook on his way to a meeting called to discuss the issue of the franchise; the consul supports the old order in contrast to his rival, Hinrich Hagenström, who favors the "universal franchise."[16] Events come to a climax when Consul Buddenbrook confronts the mob that has gathered to express its demands. The scene testifies vividly to the way a patriarchal social and economic order could preserve hierarchy even in a revolutionary situation. Irritated to find the street lamps unlit, the consul fixes on Carl Smolt, a young laborer whom he knows and angrily asks why he is there. Smolt answers that it is because of "the universal principle of the vote,"[17] and, goes on to declare, "Well, Consul, sir, that's just what I'm sayin'. We want a republic, plain and simple." When the consul responds, "But you nincompoop—you already *have* one," Smolt replies undaunted, "Well, Consul, sir, then we want 'nother besides."[18] Then, "those standing around him who knew better began

to laugh haltingly, then heartily,"[19] and the revolutionary mood dissipates with good-natured chuckling. The survival of the hierarchical social order in the novel echoes the historical reality that in Lübeck the political uproar of 1848 resulted in a 'compromise' that maintained the dominance of the leading families while granting a small say to all other citizens.[20] The episode conveys the force of tradition through the ingrained deference of Smolt's "Well, Consul, sir," and Mann drives home the power of this deference by concluding the episode with Smolt cheerfully obeying the consul's order to run off and fetch a carriage.

Carl Smolt's exchange with the consul evokes ironic laughter because, of course, as a self-governing free city, Lübeck (the unnamed city of the novel) had for all practical purposes long been a republic, and the irony builds on the fact that the exchange had actually occurred in the course of the political discussions in Lübeck in the summer of 1848.[21] In incorporating this element of historical reality into his work of fiction, however, Mann gives the humorous exchange a decisive role it lacked in the actual events of 1848. The historical reality of the Lübeck unrest involved a less good natured outcome, for there was actually some minor bloodshed before it ended. Mann creates the ironic laughter to echo the view the consul expressed to his aristocratic father-in-law, that "the whole thing was—a farce."[22] Mann's use of irony distances him from the political hopes for freedom and equality expressed earlier by Morten Schwarzkopf. The revolutionary melodrama reduces these hopes to the level of farce.

II

By raising the issues of Western political freedom and free will early in his story, and then revealing them to be tragic or farcical illusions, Mann sets the stage for the appearance later in the novel of what he sees as true freedom, a freedom rooted in German tradition. This German concept of freedom appears in a number of different forms, not only as part of the story but also as a key element of the way Mann tells the story. Mann later elaborated on the meaning and the cultural sources of this German idea of freedom in his highly polemical *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*, where he writes, "Freedom, duty, and freedom again, that is Germany."[23] The idea of duty necessarily involves the acknowledgment of some higher authority, and what Mann prized in the German idea of freedom was its emphasis on this

"aristocratic" principle. Looking back to the Protestant Reformation Mann argues that "Luther's most original and profound impact . . . was of an aristocratic nature: he perfected the freedom and self-authority of the German human being by internalizing them and thus removing them forever from the sphere of the political argument."[24] Mann emphasizes his belief that the "German concept of freedom will always be of a spiritual nature: an individualism that in order to reveal itself politically must create institutions other than those barren-abstract ones of the political West." He quotes Paul de Lagarde to explain what sort of institutions the genuine German individual requires. They must be "institutions that lift him above himself."[25] Mann saw politics in the Western European tradition as an external realm where individuals acted only out of narrow self-interest. All the forms of genuine freedom that Mann develops in *Buddenbrooks* involve renouncing this externally motivated world to serve something that lifts the individual above himself.

One of the paths Mann follows in attempting to resolve the tension between illusory and real freedom in the concluding chapters of his novel was suggested by the work of Arthur Schopenhauer that Mann read toward the end of the time that he was writing *Buddenbrooks*. Mann writes that he transferred his own powerful reaction to Schopenhauer's ideas into the life and experiences of Thomas Buddenbrook, as the time came for the central character of his novel to die.[26] Mann depicts the tragic consequences of a life driven by the illusion of freedom and then shows how an affirmation of higher ethical principles and philosophical insight into those principles could bring at least a moment of real freedom and release from the anguish of such a life. Early in the novel the theme of freedom enters on a deceptively optimistic note when Thomas Buddenbrook takes over the family firm in 1855, after the death of his father. At first, Tom enjoys a strong sense of control over his life: "The longing for action, victory, and power, the urge to force good fortune to its knees, blazed in his eyes briefly and fiercely."[27] Over time, however, his ability to control events begins to slip away as business and psychological realities gradually assert their dominating influence.

Tom's pride in taking command of the family firm reflects an old-fashioned way of doing business. As he observes to one of his friends, "I need to see how things are going with my own eyes . . . to control them on the spot by dint of my own will . . . Sad to say, that kind of personal involvement by the businessman is going out of

fashion. Time marches on, but she leaves the best behind."[28] Tom's emphasis on personal contact, reinforced by his elegant appearance, does succeed in bringing in business, but over time the rival Hagenström family, with a more modern approach, improves its fortunes while the Buddenbrook family declines. As the modern business world of the late nineteenth century takes shape, Tom finds himself increasingly alienated from it and increasingly less successful in it. One element of Tom's traditional approach involved his adherence to the high ethical standards of the firm's founder, who, according to family tradition, had told his successor: "My son, show zeal for each day's affairs of business, but only for such that make for a peaceful night's sleep."[29] When the consul cites this principle in a business discussion with Tom, he declares his intention to hold it sacred, "although now and then one may entertain doubts when confronted with people who apparently have better success without such principles."[30] The saying implies an ideal of high ethical standards as well as a policy of avoiding imprudent risks, and the contrast with the Hagenström firm implies that its more modern approach is morally suspect.

As he grows older, Tom eventually comes to feel that he is losing his ability to control events, and this loss begins to undermine his ethical approach to business. As he observes to Tony, "I feel as if something is slipping away, as if I no longer hold it as firmly in my grasp as before." While in this discouraged state, Tony suggests that he accept a potentially lucrative business deal that goes against the ethical standards established by the founder of the firm. At first Tom angrily rejects the idea, telling Tony, "You don't understand, do you, that you are suggesting I become involved in a highly unrespectable, shabby operation?"[31] But later he reconsiders his moral objections. He wonders if indeed, "this was an occasion for loud counterarguments. Consul Hermann Hagenström would not have tried to find them, or have used them."[32] Events gradually push Tom toward a choice between the realities of modern business life and his ethical principles. "Life was hard, and business, as it took its ruthless, unsentimental course, was the epitome of life in general."[33] Eventually, seeking to regain his sense of control over events, he accepts these unpleasant realities and agrees to the proposal, which involves buying the crop "in the blade,"[34] that is, before it has been harvested.

Mann provides a suitably ironic conclusion to the episode. At a party celebrating the hundredth anniversary of his firm Tom receives

a picture with portraits of the four previous owners set beneath the family motto, with its ethical injunction. Then, a few minutes later he receives a telegram indicating that the crop he bought had been destroyed by hail. He reacts with heartfelt relief to this considerable financial loss: "'It's good; it's good,' he mumbled, half aloud; and then, breathing out—satisfied—liberated [*befreit*]—he repeated once again, 'Oh, that is really good!'"[35] As indicated by the word *befreit*, his loss allows him to return to the traditional ethical standards he had internalized; it liberates him from the external motivating forces that had threatened to ensnare him.

Tom's liberating loss results from a random accident, but it anticipates a more profound experience of liberation. As he feels his strength flagging and realizes that his only son will be unwilling or unable to take over the family firm, his thoughts turn to the subject of death and immortality. Seeking insight on these questions, he comes across a book of philosophy and begins to read it. Although Tom never mentions the name of the author, we know from Mann's own testimony that it was part of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* and that Tom's enthusiastic reaction to it mirrored Mann's own response to reading the book in 1899, when he was writing the final sections of the novel.[36] For Tom, reading the book leads to a moment of revelation unlike anything he has experienced before. "He was filled with an unfamiliar sense of immense and grateful contentment. He felt the incomparable satisfaction of watching an enormously superior intellect grab hold of life, of cruel, mocking, powerful life, in order to subdue and condemn it."[37] Although Tom does not grasp all the philosophical complexities of the book, its insights into the painful nature of life are so compelling that he reads for hours.

A chapter titled, "Concerning Death and Its Relation to the Indestructibility of Our Essential Nature," speaks to Tom with particular force, and later, when he puts the book down, he felt "his whole being somehow immensely broadened."[38] The chapter resolves Tom's concerns about his own death and his lack of a successor. Schopenhauer's belief that the illusion of individual existence masked an underlying unity of being expressed in the will-to-live allows Tom to look at life and death in a new way. "That's it—I'm going to live. *It* is going to live. . . . . and thinking that it and I are separate instead of one and the same—that is the illusion that death will set right."[39] His concerns about his own individual end, about who would carry

on his family and firm, about his son all melt away in the realization that he will live on in all human beings.

Tom's revelation brings with it a profound feeling of freedom, and in contrast to the earlier illusions of freedom, Mann presents this freedom as real, although fleeting. Tom now sees death as "a joy . . . It was the return from an unspeakably painful wandering, the correction of a grave mistake, the liberation [*Befreiung*] from the most intolerable fetters."[40] Life and individuality are revealed to be a long imprisonment: "A prison, a prison with bars and chains everywhere! And staring out hopelessly from between the bars of his individuality, a man sees only the surrounding walls of external circumstance, until death comes and calls him home to freedom."[41] Tom now sees the driving power of the irrational will as the inner force within each individual that interacts with the other blind forces of nature in a causal web that excludes freedom from the natural world of time and space: "An organism—a blind, rash, pitiful eruption of the insistent assertion of the will. Far better, really, if that will were to drift free in the night without time or space, than to languish in a prison cell lit only be the flickering, uncertain flame of the intellect."[42] True freedom could only be found by escaping the deterministic world of time, space, and causality constructed by the intellect.

Tom finds this true freedom in his moment of revelation, for at that moment he realized, "not in words and sequential thoughts, but in the sudden bliss of internal illumination—he was already free, was truly liberated from all natural and artificial bonds and barriers."[43] The revelation that comes to him from the depths of his inmost being, frees him from the "deceptive perceptions of space and time, and thus of history, his preoccupation with finding honorable historical continuity in his own descendants."[44] So even the element of his outlook and personality that had been most important to him, the belief in historical tradition associated with his family and firm, comes to be seen as a deceptive illusion in his moment of revelation; he gains freedom from the weight of tradition as part of his freedom from all things that were part of the world of nature. What Tom experiences is an example of self-denial in the Schopenhauerian sense of seeing through the delusion of selfhood to the deeper reality of a unity of all things, and just as Nietzsche built his more dynamic idea of self-overcoming on that of Schopenhauer so Mann would soon move on to embrace that all-important Nietzschean concept.

Tom's moment of illumination soon passes. Although he intends to return to the ideas of the unnamed philosopher and study them more thoroughly, he feels embarrassed at the emotional excess of his experience and soon puts it out of his mind. This process of forgetting, however, takes place in the conscious world of time, space, and causality, that deceptive veil cast over the underlying reality of the irrational will. On that inner, emotional level, Tom's experience struck deep, as shown by the chapter's concluding description of him drawing up his will. The next chapter, which recounts his brief vacation to the seaside resort of Travermünde, provides further evidence of an inner change. While there Tom muses to Tony about how, over his life, he has come to prefer the sea to the mountains. "What sort of people prefer the monotony of the sea, do you suppose? It seems to me it's those who have gazed too long and too deeply into the complexity at the heart of things and so have no choice but to demand one thing from external reality: simplicity."[45] Tom's attitude expresses his sense of disengagement from the struggles of life. His earlier love of the mountains corresponded to the time in his youth when he expected to dominate and control events. Now, his love for the sea "that sends forth its waves with mystical, paralyzing fatalism"[46] expresses his weariness with life. The only true freedom lies in escape from that world of pain and suffering, and when Tom dies, a short time later, he makes good that escape.

In Schopenhauer's philosophy, the world of art offered another path of escape from the pain of life, and Mann brings this concept alive in the story of Tom's son Hanno, an oversensitive and sickly child who finds life intolerably painful. Under the influence of his mother, Gerda, an accomplished musician and a devoted follower of Richard Wagner, Hanno develops strong musical interests and abilities. The lessons of his music teacher, Herr Pfühl, are occasions of joy: "Edmund Pfühl, however, seemed to him like a tall angel dressed in a brown swallowtail coat, who took him in his arms each Monday afternoon to lead him from his everyday misery into the realm of sound, where everything was gentle, sweet, consoling, and serious."[47] Despite his close friendship with Gerda, Herr Pfühl passionately opposes her interest in Wagner's music, declaring that it is "demagoguery, blasphemy, and madness!...!...It is the end of all morality in the arts."[48] He also fears that playing this music in Hanno's presence will corrupt his soul. Eventually, however, Gerda brings Pfühl around to a grudging admiration of Wagner's profound originality,

and even persuades him to play certain of his pieces for her. When Hanno begins to compose works of his own, this Wagnerian influence makes itself felt. On one occasion, Herr Pfühl criticizes the "theatrical ending" of one of Hanno's pieces, recognizing that it derives from his own somewhat reluctant performances of Wagner. Hanno refuses to change the ending, which gives him great satisfaction: "What would it be, this resolution [*Auflösung*], this enchanting and liberated [*befreite*] descent into B major? An incomparable joy, a satisfaction of extravagant sweetness. Peace! Bliss! The Kingdom of Heaven!"[49] The Wagnerian ending of Hanno's piece liberates him from the painful bonds of earth.

Mann's belief in the liberating role of art finds appropriate symbolic expression in Hanno's love for Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*. In one of Mann's typical ironic twists, Hanno's mother takes him to see *Fidelio* as compensation for an unpleasant trip to the dentist. After attending the performance Hanno can think of nothing else. For Christmas, he asks for a toy theater with "the scenery he needed for *Fidelio*"[50] so that he can use it to recreate this artistic experience in his mind, and when he is given a harmonium, along with the toy theater, he is able to accompany his imagined performance with the appropriate music. *Fidelio*, an operatic celebration of freedom, focuses on liberation from undeserved suffering and in the work the idea of freedom from the bonds of life merges with the themes of spiritual rebirth and freedom from political oppression. Florestan, whose only crime was to speak the truth, has been unjustly imprisoned, and the despotic governor of the prison, Don Pizarro, plans to kill him. Suffering from slow starvation, Florestan sees death as liberation from his pain. He imagines he sees his grave and an angel resembling his wife Leonore, "Who will lead me to freedom in the realm of heaven."[51] Rocco, the sympathetic jailor, sees the matter in a similar light: "To kill him means to save him, / The dagger will set him free."[52] Florestan's fellow prisoners, who suffer with him also gain a glimpse of freedom when Rocco allows them to walk in the fortress garden. Comparing their prison to a grave, they rejoice at the chance to breathe "free air" and declare their hope that with God's help, "We will be free, we will find peace."[53] The grave imagery of Florestan and the other prisoners associates the idea of liberation from the physical constraints of imprisonment with the theme of freedom gained through death and rebirth.

In the second act, when Rocco and the disguised Leonore prepare for Florestan's execution by digging his grave, they try to relieve his

hunger by offering him a piece of bread and a drink of wine, an allusion to the sacraments of the Eucharist that reinforces the theme of death and rebirth. After Leonore reveals herself and prevents Don Pizarro from killing Florestan, a trumpet call announces the moment of salvation by signaling the arrival of the King's minister, who will free Florestan and the other prisoners. In the final scene, the prisoners hail the long desired hour "When justice joined with mercy / Appears before the door of our grave," and the minister, Don Fernando, declares that they should "No longer kneel down like slaves, / The harshness of tyrants is remote from me."[54] Then, after telling Rocco that since he "opened the grave" of Florestan, he should now remove his chains, the minister countermands the order and tells Leonore that it is only fitting that she should "set him free."[55] Again and again the imagery of the opera presents freedom as a form of rebirth.

In using Hanno's interest in *Fidelio* to suggest the liberating potential of art, Mann constructs his symbol with precision to emphasize a specific moment at the conclusion of the opera. When Hanno receives his toy theater he finds that "the stage was set for the final act of *Fidelio*. The poor prisoners stood with their hands folded; Don Pizarro, with massive puffy sleeves, stood in the foreground, striking a terrifying pose; and striding hastily in from the rear came the minister, who was dressed all in black and would now set everything to rights."[56] Mann's description emphasizes the moment of liberation signaled by the arrival of the minister, the moment when the poor prisoners hail their day of deliverance from the grave. *Fidelio's* themes of death and spiritual liberation spoke directly to Hanno, whose life was an unbearable torment relieved only by those brief intervals when his "tall angel," Herr Pfühl, showed the way to a higher musical realm.

As a symbol of Hanno's striving for pure spiritual freedom, however, *Fidelio* might seem somewhat inappropriate, considering the strongly political tone of the opera and of the particular scene highlighted in *Buddenbrooks*. Although Hanno's father, Tom, took part in the political life of his city and expressed his views on larger political issues, Hanno himself has no political concerns. His interest in the opera is certainly not meant to symbolize the opposition to political tyranny that Mann later had in mind when he wrote that *Fidelio* should be the festival opera for Germany's liberation from the Nazis.

Nonetheless, the political dimension of the final scene does have a bearing on the origins of the spiritual freedom that Mann affirms in

his novel. The scene takes place outside the fortress in the presence of a statue of the King, and when the minister arrives, his first words emphasize that he is acting as a direct agent of the King in bringing freedom for the prisoners. He says, "The sign and will [Wille] of the best of Kings, / leads me here to you poor people."[57] In this scene the political emphasis is not on popular resistance to tyranny, as exemplified earlier in the opera by the actions of Florestan and Leonore, but on the bestowal of freedom from above by the "best of kings."

This association of freedom with the authority of the ruler echoes the traditional context of the German idea of freedom, and Mann contrasts this kind of freedom with the popular freedom of the West in his *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*. He notes with approval that Richard Wagner wished to restore the "old-Germanic relationship between the absolute king and the free people. For in the absolute king, he said, the concept of freedom is elevated to the highest, God-filled consciousness, and the people are only free when *one man* rules, not when *many* rule."[58] This association of freedom with ruling authority also appears in *Buddenbrooks*. When Tom inherits the family firm, the reading of the will is carried out by his uncle, Consul Kröger, who repeatedly refers to Tom as "His Highness the now ruling Prince."[59] This is the moment when Tom rejoices in his sense of having the freedom to control events and "force fortune to her knees."[60] When Tom's brother, Christian, later points out the contrast to his own dependent position in the firm, he tells Tom, "You work . . . . . as master [*Herr*] and chief . . . . . you rule [*regierst*] and are free."[61] In contrast to Western freedom, which was seen as a negative freedom, a freedom from governmental control, the freedom of the ruler was idealized as a positive, disinterested freedom exercised for the good of the entire realm.

In the final scene of *Fidelio*, the prisoners hail the appearance of "Justice joined with grace [*Huld*]," and this reference to the grace the King's Minister will bestow is directly relevant to the German tradition of freedom on which Mann relied. In writing about this tradition, Wagner argued that a ruler's capacity for true freedom found its highest expression in grace. Sharing that suspicion of the state so common among late nineteenth-century cultural conservatives, Wagner saw the state as an institution bound by practical laws that ordinarily excluded the possibility of any true, positive freedom. In *Deutsche Kunst und Deutsche Politik* he writes that in contrast to the negative freedoms that governments allowed their citizens, "The exercise of

grace is the only conceivable act of positive freedom in the state."[62] For Wagner, a monarch's right to bestow clemency emerges "from a completely different sphere of existence . . . belonging to an ideal world order," and it represents a "truly free freedom." Wagner writes that this freedom, "working from above to below, has the further goal for the state, of realizing the ennobling and rewarding influence of the ideal law of pure freedom."[63] In exercising grace, the king's specific motives remain inexpressible because they lie in an ideal realm; his actions are freed from the narrow constraints of law in order to serve an overriding concern for justice.

Wagner goes on to compare the king's work, as manifested in grace, with that of the "idealistic creative artist" whose concern for the appropriateness of means to ends also remains unknowable except insofar as it appears in the finished work.[64] The allusions to *Fidelio* in Mann's novel seem to build on this parallel. The political freedom from above conveyed by the final scene of the opera, the king's exercise of grace, is transformed in *Buddenbrooks* into the freedom from above that is bestowed by the ideal realm of art. Following Wagner's footsteps as a symbolist artist, Mann employs the artistic symbol as a liberating device that elevates the reader above the physical realm of cause and effect to a higher order of being. In his *Reflections* he observes that in contrast to the political manifesto, "only a work of art can *liberate*."[65]

Mann's use of irony, one of the most characteristic features of his literary art, also reveals his debt to this peculiarly German conception of freedom. In *Thomas Mann the Ironic German*, Erich Heller argues that the "irony that pervades the whole work of Thomas Mann,"[66] results from "the calculated and artistically mastered incongruity between the meaning of the story and the manner of telling it."[67] Mann later recalled with satisfaction the "complement" paid him by a woman artist from Munich when she remarked of *Buddenbrooks*, "I was *not* bored in reading your book, and with every page I read I wondered that I was not bored."[68] Mann's first novel, written in a time marked by daring literary innovation, relies on the most traditional means for recounting its story, and as Heller observes, since the story centers on the decline of a traditional way of life, there is profound irony in "giving a traditional form to the very experience of its disintegration."[69] In describing with distancing irony, the passing of the *bürgerlich* world of his youth, Mann found an appropriate means for conveying his ambiguous feelings about that world, while

also adding another dimension to his conception of art as a vehicle for achieving freedom.

Mann provided his clearest explanation of the relationship between freedom and irony in his essay on Schopenhauer, where he associates irony with Apollo in his role as "god of the Muses" and thus of art. He describes Apollo as "a god of distance, of space, not of pathos and pathology or involvement, a god not of suffering but of freedom. He is an objective god, the god of irony."[70] Working within the framework of Schopenhauer's philosophy, he then goes on to observe, "In irony, then, as Schopenhauer saw it, in creative objectivity, knowledge was freed from its bondage to the will, and the attention was no longer blurred by any motive."[71] Mann saw the mediating role of art as the source of its capacity for irony and freedom. "Just this is the position of art between spirit and life . . . [I]t is that of a moon-enchanted mediator between the two spheres. This mediating position is the source of its irony."[72] Although Mann credits Schopenhauer for his conception of irony as a kind of freedom, the philosopher's discussions of irony fall short of attributing to it the larger, liberating role described by Mann, and focus primarily on irony as an aspect of the process by which an individual's false concepts are punctured by perceptions of objective reality. Mann's conception of irony as freedom builds on Schopenhauer's concept, but moves beyond it to give irony a much broader significance.

Mann's use of irony in *Buddenbrooks* reflects its distancing and liberating role. The descriptions of young Hanno Buddenbrook's experiences in school convey in heightened form the tormenting quality of his life in general, and in this situation ironic humor provides one of his few defenses. Alienated from his teachers and classmates, Hanno and his only friend, the impoverished Count Möln referred to them in their own private way, which "showed a dismissive and ironic coldness, a mocking distance and strangeness."[73] Ironic humor lessened Hanno's pain by providing some distance from the ongoing tragedy and suffering of life. Mann's treatment of political issues in *Buddenbrooks* provides another revealing insight into the way he uses ironic humor to distance himself and his readers from a sphere of activity he regarded with contempt. The description of the 1848 revolution ended with ironic laughter that emphasized the political ignorance of those involved in the disorders.

Mann causes this ironic laughter to re-echo throughout the novel by means of Tony Buddenbrook's recollections of her brief romance

with Morten Schwarzkopf. Tony had sensed the depth of the young medical student's enthusiasm for the liberal ideals that found expression in 1848, and because of her attraction to him she had identified with those ideals despite her shallow grasp of their real meaning. By having Tony echo bits and pieces of the political ideas Morten had earlier expressed to her, Mann emphasizes the incongruity of her vehement expression of political sentiments she failed to understand. At one point, for example, when Hanno is being cared for by Dr. Grabow, the family doctor, Tony cannot help but compare him unfavorably with Morten. She tells Hanno's nursemaid, "Grabow was around during the events of '48—he was a young man himself. But do you suppose he ever got excited about what was happening—about freedom and justice and the overthrow of privileges and arbitrary power? He's a learned man, but I'm sure that the Confederation's outrageous laws dealing with the universities and the press left him completely cold."[74] By having Tony criticize Grabow for a lack of interest in political issues that she espouses only because they remind her of an earlier romantic moment in her life, Mann creates an ironic incongruity that seems to suggest that the fashion for liberal political ideas may have similarly shallow roots.

The positive elements of spiritual freedom Mann develops in *Buddenbrooks*, freedom through self-denial, through art, and through irony, provide alternatives to the liberal conceptions of political and philosophical freedom that the novel presents as illusory. To the extent that a political concept of freedom emerges in a positive light it is the traditional German idea of freedom associated with authority from above, as seen in the exercise of royal authority in the passages dealing with *Fidelio*. In the strongly apolitical works Mann wrote before World War I the theme linking freedom with authority reappears in a particularly suggestive way in *Death in Venice*, where Mann gives expression to it in a Nietzschean context totally divorced from the world of political engagement.

Written in 1911, *Death in Venice* marks the high point of the apolitical aestheticism that characterized Mann's writings in the years before World War I. Mann later wrote that the three thinkers who provided the basis for his "intellectual-artistic development," Schopenhauer, Wagner and Nietzsche, "are like a triple star of eternally united spirits that shines powerfully in the German sky."[75] Of this triad Mann saw Nietzsche as the culminating figure who drew together the ideas of his predecessors and synthesized them with his own to espouse artistic

creativity as the highest human achievement. Nietzsche's argument that the crowning works of ancient Greek art resulted from the interaction of Apollonian and Dionysian cultural forces provided Mann with an intellectual framework within which he would explore the origins of artistic creativity in literary works written over the rest of his life. This Apollonian–Dionysian dynamic first emerges clearly in *Death in Venice* where Mann's imagery evokes the culture of ancient Greece to provide an appropriate background for developing his ideas on the origin and nature of beauty. The story also provides insight into Mann's beliefs about the nature of freedom, for while the central character, Gustav von Aschenbach, eventually loses any capacity for free will, it is only after he achieves a supreme moment of artistic creativity by virtue of the aristocratic freedom Mann associated with the great achievements of the German cultural tradition.

In the opening paragraph of *Death in Venice*, the frustrated and overworked writer, Gustav von Aschenbach, leaves his house to go for a walk out in the open. In the wording of the German text, he had "*das Freie gesucht*"—literally he had "sought the free."[76] The phrase simply means he had gone out into the open, unstructured, world of nature, but its literal meaning points to the issue of freedom that Mann goes on the develop in the story. And this open, unstructured, kind of freedom, so different from the freedom celebrated in the German tradition, proves deeply unsettling to the story's central character. Aschenbach's walk leads to an abrupt change in the direction of his life. When Aschenbach goes out to seek "*das Freie*," he activates within himself emotional forces he had long held at bay. His walk takes him past a cemetery where he notices a mortuary building in Greek Byzantine style, with Greek crosses, hieratic designs, and religious inscriptions that inspire in him a moment of mystic reverie. Suddenly he becomes aware of a man standing on the steps of the building, a man of striking appearance, with "a bold and domineering, even a ruthless air," whose lips are pulled back to reveal "long, white, glistening teeth to the gums."[77]

This figure, appearing in a setting rich with the symbols of Greek religion, inspires Aschenbach with a strange feeling of freedom and unrest; "he felt the most surprising consciousness of a widening of inward barriers, a kind of vaulting unrest, a youthfully ardent thirst for distant scenes."[78] As he grapples with this unexpected reaction, Aschenbach attempts to master it through reason (*Vernunft*) and "the pattern of self-discipline he had followed from his youth up."[79] He

recognizes that "the source of the unexpected contagion was known to him only too well. This yearning for new and distant scenes, this craving for freedom [*Befreiung*], release, forgetfulness—they were, he admitted to himself, an impulse toward flight, flight from the spot that was the daily theatre of a rigid, cold, and passionate service."[80] In the opening pages of Mann's story, when Aschenbach seeks "*das Freie*," he finds it not only in the world of nature outside the narrow confines of his study, but also within himself in the psychological freedom from control that moves him when he sees the mysterious stranger.

The inner freedom from control Aschenbach goes on to experience in ever greater measure as the story unfolds, proves to be a source both of creativity and destruction. Initially it serves to loosen the grip of an excessively harsh dedication to reason and regimen, a dedication that threatens to block the creative sources of his writing. By the end of the story, however, freedom from inner control leads Aschenbach to dissolution and death. The kind of true freedom Mann could affirm as a key ingredient of the creative process appears only at a moment of precarious balance near the middle of the story, the moment when Aschenbach returns in his imagination to the culture of ancient Greece.

When Aschenbach's feeling of restlessness leads him to travel to Italy his thoughts travel still further south to enter the sunlit world of classical Greece. The Greek imagery associated with the (Dionysian) figure Aschenbach sees at the beginning of the story reappears when he arrives in Venice. Mann describes Tadzio, the Polish boy who becomes the object of Aschenbach's passion, as the incarnation of Apollonian beauty. "His face recalled the noblest moment of Greek sculpture—. . . the brow and nose descending in one line, the winning mouth, the expression of pure and godlike serenity."[81] The boy's head, "was the head of Eros, with the yellowish bloom of Parian marble, with fine serious brows."[82] As Aschenbach sits on the beach contemplating Tadzio's beautiful form, his imagination conjures up an image of the ancient plane-tree outside the walls of Athens where Socrates had conversed with his youthful friend Phaedrus.[83]

Nietzsche argued that the highest perfection of Greek art resulted from a synthesis of Apollonian form and Dionysian spirit. Tadzio's perfect beauty seems to inspire a similar, if momentary, creative balance in Aschenbach. His powerful sexual attraction to the boy reflects the inner freedom from restraint associated with the Dionysian

forces increasingly in command of his passions, but the Apollonian forces of self-discipline, form, and reason (as seen in the allusion to Socrates) remain sufficiently strong to give his urges a creative outlet. Tadzio himself embodies an aristocratic union of freedom with the discipline of form: "Soon the observer knew every line and pose of this so exalted [*so gehobenen*] body that presented itself so freely [*so frei*].."[84] For Aschenbach, Tadzio becomes the model for his own creative activity: "What discipline, what precision of thought were expressed by the tense youthful perfection of this form!...Was not the same force at work in himself when he strove in cold fury to liberate [*befreite*] from the marble mass of language the slender forms of his art."[85] And the intense creativity generated by the forces at work within Aschenbach realizes its full potential in the magnitude of his achievement, as he "fashioned his little essay after the model Tadzio's beauty set: that page and a half of choicest prose, so chaste, so lofty, so poignant with feeling, which would shortly be the wonder and admiration of the multitude."[86] "This lad should be in a sense his model, his style should follow the lines of this figure that seemed to him divine; he would snatch up this beauty into the realms of the mind, as once the eagle bore the Trojan shepherd aloft."[87]

Viewed as a commentary on the nature of freedom, Mann's story is an exercise in ironic turns. A restless urge for freedom sets the story in motion. Thriving in the emotional void of a life too long constricted by rigid self-control, that increasingly powerful urge reveals itself as sexual desire freed from traditional moral conventions, an urge that gradually erodes Aschenbach's defenses as he struggles to maintain his carefully constructed world. At the height of the struggle, when channeled by discipline and authority, this dangerous, tradition-dissolving urge for freedom fuels a creative act that arouses the world's wonder and admiration. But unbridled freedom, freedom detached from the authoritative control of reason and self-discipline becomes license, and points toward dissolution and death.

In the days following the composition of his essay Aschenbach becomes aware that Venice has become infected with a deadly disease, and this knowledge sets up within him a struggle between the forces of life and death. The city authorities have contrived to suppress news of the disease, lest it damage the tourist trade, but Aschenbach pries the truth from a reluctant tourist agent who finally advises him to depart immediately. After briefly considering the idea of warning Tadzio's family and taking his leave, Aschenbach decides to keep the

city's secret and yields to the allure of love and death. That night he has a fearful dream that reveals the terrifying power of the Dionysian forces that have taken full possession of him. Mann's description of the dream elaborates on a passage from *The Birth of Tragedy* in which Nietzsche describes the similarity of the Greek theater to the mountain sites where Dionysus was worshiped: "The structure of the Greek theater reminds us of a lonely mountain valley: the architecture of the stage resembles a luminous cloud configuration which the Bacchae behold as they swarm down from the mountaintops, a marvelous frame in the center of which Dionysos manifests himself to them."[88] Initially, Aschenbach did not find himself present in the dream. "Rather, its theatre seemed to be his own soul, and the events burst in from outside, violently overcoming the profound resistance of his spirit; passed him through and left him, left the whole cultural structure of a lifetime trampled on, ravaged, and destroyed."[89] The setting of the dream echoes the passage from Nietzsche. "A glow lighted up the surrounding mist and by it he recognized a mountain scene like that about his country home. From the wooded heights, from among the tree-trunks and crumbling moss-covered rocks, a troop came tumbling and raging down, a whirling rout of men and animals, and overflowed the hillside with flames and human forms, with clamour and the reeling dance."[90] Mann elaborates Nietzsche's spare description of the Dionysian celebration to infuse it with terrifying emotional power.

In the dream Aschenbach continues the inner struggle that had begun earlier that day, the struggle between the desire to surrender to his passion and the duty to uphold the standards that had shaped his life. "He trembled, he shrank, his will was steadfast to preserve and uphold his own god against this stranger who was sworn enemy to dignity and self-control."[91] The ancient Greeks referred to Dionysus as the stranger God, because he did not originally belong to the traditional pantheon and was thought to have come to Greece from Asia. In his dream Aschenbach's efforts to resist this alien god and his followers prove fruitless. "But now the dreamer was in them and of them, the stranger god was his own . . . and in his very soul he tasted the bestial degradation of his fall."[92] With this inability to uphold his own, more Apollonian, god, Aschenbach fails on a personal level to achieve what he had accomplished earlier as a writer when he composed the brilliant essay inspired by Tadzio's beauty: that creative, dialectical balance between the Dionysian and Apollonian forces. In

discussing the interaction of these forces in ancient Greek drama, Nietzsche described how the aesthetic participant was driven to the edge of self-dissolution by the power of the Dionysian music and then pulled back from that edge by the Apollonian vision appearing on the stage. Nietzsche believed that as a result of this interaction the ancient Greeks left the theater deeply aware of the tragedy of life and heroically determined to affirm it in the face of that tragedy. But within Aschenbach's mental theater the Dionysian force prevails without Apollonian restraint, and he "woke from this dream shattered, unhinged, powerless in the demon's grip."[93] From this moment onward Aschenbach loses any freedom of choice he had previously possessed; his passion drives him relentlessly to self-destruction.

However strong is Mann's debt to Nietzsche in the intellectual structure of his story, Wagner's spirit hovers over its conclusion. Wagner's death in Venice in 1883 inspired the title of the story, and Mann gives Aschenbach a death in keeping with the idea that so strongly influenced Wagner's later works, Schopenhauer's idea of death as a blessed release from the pain of life. Aschenbach dies on the beach as he observes his beloved Tadzio, "a completely isolated and disconnected figure, with floating hair, out there in the sea and wind, against a misty boundlessness"[94] As he watches, "It seemed to him the pale and lovely Summoner [*Psychagog*] out there smiled at him and beckoned; as though, with the hand he lifted from his hip, he pointed outward as he hovered on before into an immensity of richest expectation. And, as so often before, he rose to follow."[95] The term Mann uses to describe this vision of Tadzio, *Psychagog*,—literally meaning the "leader of souls"—refers to the Greek god Hermes, who conducted the souls of the dead to Hades. The *Liebestod* of Mann's *Death in Venice* differs in significant respects from that of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, but both express the merging of love and death in an escape from reality.

III

Germany's defeat in World War I brought about a profound change in Mann's world view and caused an important shift of perspective regarding the apolitical aestheticism that marked his writings in the prewar years. In 1925 he wrote a letter to *The Dial* that highlight the intellectual distance separating his views, as a supportive citizen of the Weimar Republic, from those expressed in the conclusion of

Death in Venice. Writing in English, he began by observing that a birthday present he had recently received, a beautifully bound facsimile copy of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* manuscript, gave him the feeling of being "in possession of something holy." But then he went on to add that "these scattered groups of precise Gothic notes signify something ultimate, supreme, profoundly precious—something to which Nietzsche bade for us a final farewell, a farewell until death: they signify a world which, for reasons of conscience, we Germans of the present are forbidden to love over much. This is the pinnacle, the consummation of romanticism, its furthest artistic expansion, the imperialism of a world-conquering oblivion—of an intoxicating self-annihilation."[96] The events of the world war and the chaos that followed it caused a shift of primacy within the triad of influences that had guided Mann's thought in the prewar period, a shift from Schopenhauer and Wagner to Nietzsche. All three thinkers remained important to Mann, but from this time forward he adhered to Nietzsche's life-affirming philosophy.

Fully conscious of the political dangers facing Weimar Germany and Europe as a whole, Mann had come to realize how this Wagnerian romanticism contributed to those dangers. As he observes it, "is uncongenial to the soul of Europe which, if it is to be saved to life and reason, requires some hard word and some of that self-conquest which Nietzsche upheld with heroism and exemplariness."[97] Mann goes on to suggest how he, as an artist, looks on the conflicting demands of his past and present beliefs. "Never . . . has the contrast between aesthetic charm and ethical responsibility been greater than today. Let us acknowledge it as the source of irony! A love of life defends itself ironically against the fascination of death; but in art it is uncertain whether an irony which turns against life and virtue and knows how to treasure the allurements of forbidden love is not indeed a more religious thing."[98] Although Mann does not renounce his fascination with the aesthetic of love and death, he sees artistic irony as the reconciling instrument between the contradictory demands of aesthetic charm and ethical responsibility. For Mann a love of life now becomes the guiding principle of his artistic work, and also of the political activity and writing to which he devotes ever-increasing attention.

The change from Mann's contemptuous rejection of politics in the period before World War I to his active embrace of political engagement during and after the Weimar era could not be more striking,

and Mann commented on this change in the forward to his Joseph novels. He observes, "My conscience had been awake in a political sense since the outbreak of the first World War, which I had been constrained to recognize as the spectacular finale of the bourgeois era and the starting-point of incalculable subversions."[99] At the outset of the war Mann expressed his newly aroused political sentiments in the form of an extreme German nationalism that trumpeted the superiority of the German cultural tradition over that of Western Europe. Recognizing the great significance of the war as a "turning-point in the times, and at the same time . . . a profound crisis in my own life,"[100] Mann devoted much of his time during the war to writing a book with the profoundly inappropriate title, *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*. Mann could choose such a title because the cultural nationalism he espoused during the war entailed a rejection of the whole sphere of activity that the term political embraced in the Western European sense. But as Mann notes, his choice of title for his book availed him nothing: "After that I was ensnared head and heart in politics, the very thing I had sought to ward off in this comprehensive book; from then on I was compelled to take a definite stand."[101] Mann argues that the self-examination involved in writing this book brought about the change in his attitude toward politics, that in recognizing himself he no longer remained what he was. He writes, that after completing the book, "I was prepared to complement my literary Europeanism, of which the book is full, with political Europeanism, to accept the European-democratic religion of humanity within my moral horizon, which so far had been bounded solely by late German romanticism, by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Wagner."[102] One can also assume that the political and social upheavals attendant on Germany's defeat in the war strongly reinforced this change of outlook. The old Germany of Mann's youth no longer existed, and Mann determinedly turned from the past to engage the new realities of the postwar era.

Mann wrote his second great novel, *The Magic Mountain*, over a period beginning before World War I, and extending well into the Weimar period, and this work gave him an opportunity to express in artistic form the philosophical transformation that occurred in his outlook over that time. The novel centers on the intellectual adventures of Hans Castorp, an uncomplicated young man who goes off to visit his cousin at a tuberculosis sanatorium in Switzerland. During the visit he is himself diagnosed with tuberculosis and spends the next several years in the rarefied physical and intellectual atmosphere

of the place. He soon makes the acquaintance of two diametrically opposed intellectuals, Ludovico Settembrini and Leo Naphta, who vie for his attention and loyalty. Settembrini ardently defends the Western European liberal tradition with its faith in reason, progress, humanism, and democracy; Naphta espouses a religious authoritarianism embracing an aesthetic, irrational, romantic world view. Through much of the novel Castorp listens and carefully weighs the arguments of the two men.

Mann reveals the Nietzschean outcome of this intellectual dialogue in a chapter titled "Snow." A massive snow storm overtakes Hans Castorp while skiing in the mountains, and he soon finds himself hopelessly lost. Attempting to make his way back, he eventually realizes he has gone in a complete circle.[103] With less than an hour of daylight remaining, he fortifies himself with a drink of port, and then, finding his thought processes increasingly confused, gives in to a desire to rest. He immediately falls asleep, and dreams of ancient Greece. Just as he did with Aschenbach's dream in *Death in Venice*, Mann takes his inspiration for Castorp's dream from Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*. At the conclusion of his book, Nietzsche reemphasizes his belief that the Dionysian and Apollonian forces always remain closely intertwined, even when one force appears to be ascendant. Referring to the rich effects of Apollonian beauty, which he believes have temporarily receded from cultural prominence, he writes, "The reader may intuit these effects if he has ever, though only in a dream, been carried back to the ancient Hellenic way of life."[104] In this world of "pure and noble lines" seeing "all about him men moving solemnly or delicately, with harmonious sounds and rhythmic gestures: would he not then, overwhelmed by this steady stream of beauty, be forced to raise his hands to Apollo and call out: 'Blessed Greeks! how great must be your Dionysos, if the Delic god thinks such enchantments necessary to cure you of your dithyrambic madness!'"[105] Nietzsche then imagines an ancient Greek with the countenance of Aeschylus answering: "But you should add, extraordinary stranger, what suffering must this race have endured in order to achieve such beauty! Now come with me to the tragedy and let us sacrifice in the temple of both gods."[106] Nietzsche closes his book with this parable emphasizing not only the tragic nature of life, but also the need to affirm it by honoring the dynamic interaction of Dionysian and Apollonian forces.

Hans Castorp's dream follows a similar trajectory, but concludes with what must be described as a narrow triumph of Apollonian and

Western values. He finds himself in a sunlit Mediterranean world near a "southern sea of deepest blue . . . where palms rose tall and small white houses gleamed among cypress groves. Ah, it was all too much, too blest for sinful mortals, that glory of light, that deep purity of the sky, that sunny freshness on the water!"[107] In this setting of unparalleled beauty, Castorp finds himself surrounded by people "on every hand human beings, children of sun and sea, were stirring or sitting. Beautiful young human creatures, so blithe, so good and gay, so pleasing to see—at sight of them Hans Castorp's whole heart opened in a responsive love, keen almost to pain."[108] In addition to the beauty Castorp finds in his fellow creatures, he also observes a high seriousness in their bearing and actions, "A dignity, even a gravity, was held, as it were, in solution in their lightest mood, perceptible only as an ineffable spiritual influence, a high seriousness without austerity, a reasoned goodness conditioning every act."[109] In *Magic Mountain*, Mann's great novel of the Weimar era, once again the liberal, Western European conception of freedom is presented as weak and potentially illusory, but now the mocking tone has been replaced by horrified sympathy, as Mann examines the unequal conflict between old-fashioned liberalism and a dangerous new adversary powerfully armed with the symbolist aesthetic Mann himself had found so seductive. Castorp is free only in a dream—one that might at any moment dissolve into a Dionysian, and self-destroying, concoction.

Mann's fictional description of the struggle of Nietzschean forces in *Magic Mountain* reveals an outlook on freedom and politics that anticipates the themes of the lectures he delivered on his coast-to-coast tour of the United States in 1938. With the threat of Nazi aggression looming large in Europe, Mann outlined the measures he thought necessary to assure the victory of democracy. The novelist warned his audiences against any compromise with fascist regimes totally opposed to the democratic ideals of truth, freedom, and justice. Those in Mann's audience with long memories, and Mann himself—as a master of irony—must certainly have appreciated the historical irony that had led him to espouse an intellectual and political position that seemed to be so radically different from that of his youth, when he had strongly criticized the faith in democracy and freedom so basic to Western European liberalism. In the course of one of these lectures, later published under the optimistic title, "The Coming Victory of Democracy," Mann referred to this change of outlook, but he also claimed a substantial degree of continuity with his

earlier views. Particularly with respect to what it says about freedom, Mann's lecture reveals not only the enduring influence of the peculiarly German concept of freedom, but also his ability to adapt that concept to dramatically different political circumstances.

In "The Coming Victory of Democracy" Mann argued that defeating fascism depended on correcting certain failings that had weakened democratic forces in the past: "A reform of freedom is necessary which will make of it something very different from the freedom that existed and could exist in the times of our fathers and grandfathers, the epoch of bourgeois liberalism. Now we need something different from 'laissez-faire, laissez-aller,' for freedom cannot survive on such a basis."[110] Mann called for both a spiritual and a socioeconomic reform of freedom. Spiritual reform was needed because, in his view, the freedom associated with passive liberalism lacked the strength and determination to defeat the powerful forces of political irrationalism mobilized by fascism. Fearing the consequences of a humanistic pacifism that yielded to a policy of appeasement, Mann warned that faced with "fanaticism incarnate, a freedom which through sheer goodness and humane skepticism no longer believes in itself will be irrevocably lost. It is not the sort of humanity which is weak and patient to the point of self-doubt that freedom needs today."[111] Having experienced first-hand the propaganda advantage the fascists gained by presenting themselves as a young, confident, and dynamic movement, Mann emphasized the costs of self-doubt: "Such an attitude makes freedom look pathetic and contemptible in the face of a power-concept which is not in the least sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought. What is needed is a humanity strong in will and firm in the determination to preserve itself. Freedom must discover its virility."[112]

In addition to his appeal for a spiritual reform of the idea of freedom, Mann also called for a new approach to socioeconomic issues that would allow the forces of democracy to compete more effectively with totalitarian mass movements. To achieve this goal he rejected the laissez-faire tradition to emphasize that "freedom must be restored through social discipline."[113] Paradoxically, he praised Franklin D. Roosevelt as a "conservative statesman just because of the social bent which he gives to democracy. He is a true friend and a genuine servant of liberty even when he limits and regulates it socialistically, for it is by such means that he takes the wind out of the sails of fascism and bolshevism alike."[114] The belief that freedom required

social discipline to be spiritually and politically powerful echoed the German traditions Mann had prized in his youth, and he claimed that what he wanted was "a reform of freedom—in the conservative sense."[115] He even went on to associate this advocacy of democracy and freedom with an aristocratic stance: "Real democracy, as we understand it, can never dispense with aristocratic attributes—if the word "aristocratic" is used not in the sense of birth or any sort of privilege, but in a spiritual sense."[116] This would be the case "if the principle of education is allowed to dominate and tendencies prevail to raise the lower classes to an appreciation of culture and to accept the leadership of the better elements."[117] Reflecting on the mysterious combination of the animal and the human in mankind, Mann echoed the Nietzschean concept of self-overcoming in his observation that, in humanity, nature had produced "a being which belongs at the same time to itself and to a higher order of things."[118] Striving to attain the ideals of this higher order was fundamental to the democratic vision Mann had embraced. "Democracy wishes to elevate mankind, to teach it to think, to set it free."[119]

The ideas Mann set forth in "The Coming Victory of Democracy" reveal his determined attempt to preserve what he saw as uniquely valuable in the German tradition of spiritual freedom, while incorporating it into a political outlook that had undergone dramatic change, from the conservative, aristocratic stance of his youth to the enthusiastic support for the forces of democracy expressed in his lecture. The transformation of Mann's political outlook had begun with the defeat of Germany in World War I, and had been powerfully reinforced by the rising influence of the Nazi movement in the decades that followed. Hitler's seizure of power brought political tyranny to the German people and led to exile for Mann and his family. Against this backdrop of political oppression Mann invoked the ideal of freedom with increasing force, speaking out frequently against the Nazi dictatorship and contrasting the freedom celebrated in the German cultural tradition with the political enslavement of Hitler's regime. In the letters he wrote during the 1930s he repeatedly observed that Beethoven's *Fidelio*, with its message of freedom from tyranny, was "made to be the festival opera for the day of liberation."[120] Here Mann is writing without irony, and with more than aesthetic freedom in mind.

Mann's trajectory, from *Buddenbrooks* and *Death in Venice* to *Magic Mountain* and "The Coming Victory of Democracy," allow one to see

how the novelist adapted his enduring faith in spiritual freedom to the changing political conditions of his time. *Buddenbrooks* captures the social and intellectual world in which he moved at the beginning of his career. In it he addressed political issues directly by mocking the political and philosophical traditions of West European liberalism as hollow and illusory in comparison to the positive spiritual freedom embodied in German tradition. *Death in Venice*, published more than a decade later shows the further development of the symbolist outlook that emerged strongly toward the end of *Buddenbrooks*; here, Mann draws together the different elements of spiritual freedom explored in his earlier work and presents them in a unified Nietzschean framework that expresses his apolitical aestheticism at it zenith. *The Magic Mountain*, published during the politically tumultuous decade of the 1920s, demonstrated that Mann was no longer the "nonpolitical man" of his early career, and had become instead intensely concerned with political events.

And yet, even the mature Thomas Mann was drawn not to Locke or Rousseau but to the German tradition with its paradoxical combination of democratic and aristocratic elements. In his "Versuch über Schiller," which he wrote during the last year of his life, Mann observes that "one finds in the statements about politics and the social problem of this ideologue of freedom a realistic objectivity which takes one aback."[121] He quotes the lines of Schiller's epigram "Majestas populi" to drive home his point, "'Majesty of human nature! Should I seek you in the multitude? At all times you have dwelt among the few.'"[122] After his Weimar-era conversion, Mann no longer treated the striving for political freedom with irony—but he still found Schiller's aesthetic and elitist approach most appealing. The German idea of freedom, in its varying manifestations, had accompanied him and shaped his thinking throughout his life, a life that had stretched from the Wagnerian world of the fin de siècle to the horrific era of the Hitlerian dictatorship, and ended in what Mann found to be a politically free, but worryingly cultureless Cold War America. He was, perhaps, its last great proponent—and certainly one of those who understood most clearly its attractions and its dangers.

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Notes

Editors' Introduction

1. William J. McGrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974).
2. Several of the most important articles that made up Schorske's subsequent (and Pulitzer Prize-winning) book *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981) had been published during the period when McGrath was studying with him.
3. William J. McGrath, "Student Radicalism in Vienna," *Journal of Contemporary History* 2, no. 3 (July 1967): 192.
4. Carl E. Schorske's first major publication in this mode was "Freud as Hannibal: the Politics of the Brother Band," *Central European History* 7, 1 (March 1974): 31–57 (quotation from p. 32). A year earlier he published "Politics and Patricide in Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*," *American Historical Review* 78 (April 1973): 328–47. That article subsequently became a chapter in *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*.
5. William J. McGrath, "Reply to Rothman and Isenberg," *Central European History* 7, no. 1 (March 1974): 79–83.
6. Ibid., 79–80.
7. Ibid., 82–83.
8. John Toews' synthetic response to the controversies appeared in the form of an extensive review of another, slightly later, major publication in the field: Peter Gay's *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988). Toews' review was published as "Historicizing Psychoanalysis: Freud in His Time and for Our Time," *The Journal of Modern History* 63, no. 3 (Sept. 1991): 504–45.
9. See, for example, Carl E. Schorske, "To The Egyptian Dig: Freud's Pscyho-Archeology of Cultures," *Thinking With History: Explorations in the Passage to Modernism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 191–215; Richard H. Armstrong, *A Compulsion for Antiquity: Freud and the Ancient World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); Jacques Le Rider, *Freud, de l'Acropole au Sinaï: Le retour* à *l'Antique des Modernes viennois* (Paris: PUF, 2002).
10. William J. McGrath, "Mahler and Freud: The Dream of the Stately House," in *Gustav Mahler Kolloquium 1979: Ein Bericht* (Kassel: Bärenreiter Verlag, 1981), 40–51.
11. See now the new translation of Winckelmann's *History*, with a fine introductory essay by Alex Potts. Johann Jacob Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2006). Winckelmann's statements about freedom can be found on pp. 187, 188, and 303; quotation, p. 187. On Zeuxis, see Ibid., pp. 198–99.

12. Alex Potts, "Introduction," in Ibid., p. 27.
13. As it happens, too, many of the "Greek" sculptures Winckelmann saw in Rome were not actually produced in Hellas, but were Roman copies of Greek works.
14. See Eleni Bastéa, *The Creation of Modern Athens: Planning the Myth* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
15. See Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most, and James E. G. Zetzel, "Introduction," in F.A. Wolf, *Prolegomena to Homer (1795)*, trans. Grafton, Most, and Zetzel (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), and Anthony Grafton, "Prolegomena to Friedrich August Wolf," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 44 (1981): 103–9.
16. Heyne quoted in John Edwin Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship*, vol. 3, 2nd edn. (New York: Hafner, 1964), 52.
17. For more on Wolf, see the references in note 14 and in Suzanne Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750–1970* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 16–24.
18. On the tradition of German philhellenism, see Marchand, *Down from Olympus*.
19. See Frederick Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism: The Genesis of Modern German Political Thought, 1790–1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 48–56, 93–101.
20. Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, trans. Reginald Snell (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004), 27 (Letter 2).
21. Ibid., 51–52.
22. Ibid., 29–30 (Letter 3).
23. The French phrase is "forcer à etre libre," which should suggest "forcing" in the sense of training a plant (in a "forcing" or greenhouse), but the line has often been translated as cited in the text to suggest Rousseau's more authoritarian side. See, for example, J. L. Talmon, *The Rise of Totalitarian Democracy* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1952).
24. On the great importance of this debate in the period between about 1790 and 1830 see Suzanne Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 66–101.
25. Marie-Lise Mitsou, "Le Philhéllénisme bavarois et la 'Grande Idée'," *Revue Germanique Internationale* (*Phihellénismes et transferts culturels dans l'Europe du XIXe siècle*) 1–2 (2005): 35–44.
26. Jacob Fallmerayer, *Geschichte der Halbinsel Morea während des Mittelalters*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Cotta Verlag, 1830, 1836).
27. Marchand, *Down from Olympus*, p. 52.
28. See Wagner's open letter to Nietzsche of June 12, 1872, published in the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (June 23, 1872), in *Nietzsche Briefwechsel: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 2/4, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin, 1978), 16.
29. E. M. Butler, *The Tyranny of Greece Over Germany* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1935).
30. Hans Kohn, *The Mind of Germany: The Education of a Nation* (New York: Harpers, 1965); Wolf Lepenies, *The Seduction of Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006)

31. Lepenies, *Seduction*, 2.
32. Ibid., 25–26.
33. For a comprehensive account of this version, see David Dennis, *Inhumanities: Nazi Interpretations of Western Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
34. McGrath, "Reply," 82–83.
35. Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism*, 103.

Introduction

1. Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man, In a Series of Letters* (New York: Continuum, 1989), 111 (hereafter, Schiller, *Education*).
2. Ibid., 110–12.
3. Ibid., 51.
4. Leonard Krieger, *The German Idea of Freedom, History of a Political Tradition* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1957), 3 (hereafter, Krieger, *Freedom*).
5. Ibid., 5.
6. Ibid., 6.
7. Ibid., 34.
8. Immanuel Kant, *The Philosophy of Kant*, ed. Carl J. Friedrich (New York: Modern Library, 1949), 137–39 (hereafter Kant, *Philosophy*).
9. Ibid., xli.
10. Ibid., xi.
11. Ibid., 193.
12. Ibid., 198.
13. Ibid., 170.
14. Krieger, *Freedom*, 105–6.
15. Ibid., 104.
16. Kant, *Philosophy*, xxxix.
17. Krieger, *Freedom*, 110–11.
18. Schiller, *Education*, 2–3.
19. Kant, *Philosophy*, xl.
20. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner Press, 1951), 198–99.

1 Freedom and Authority: Goethe's *Faust* and the Greek War of Independence

1. Flodoard Freiherrr von Biedermann, ed., *Goethes Gespräche* (hereafter Biedermann) (Leipzig: F. W. v. Biedermann, 1910), vol. III, 408. All translations from the German are mine unless otherwise indicated.
2. Wilhelm Mommsen, *Die Politischen Anschauungen Goethes* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1948), 167.
3. Biedermann, III, 311.
4. Ibid., 10.
5. Ibid., 74.
6. Wilhelm Mommsen, *Die Politischen Anschauungen Goethes*, 167.
7. Ibid., 168

8. Biedermann, II, 571–72.
9. Ibid., III, 25.
10. Ibid.,137.
11. Ibid., 213 (June 29, 1825).
12. Otto Pniower, *Goethes Faust Zeugnisse und Excurse zu seiner Entstehungsgeschichte* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1899), 139.
13. Biedermann, III, 163.
14. Otto Pniower, *Goethes Faust Zeugnisse und Excurse zu seiner Entstehungsgeschichte,* 145–54.
15. Hans Gerhard Gräf, *Goethe ueber seine Dichtungen. Versuch einer Sammlung aller Aeusserungen des Dichters ueber seine Poetischen Werke* (hereafter Gräf), (Frankfurt am Main: Literarische Anstalt Rütten & Loening, 1904) pt. II, vol. II, 318–19.
16. Sir William Gell, *Narrative of a Journey in the Morea* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1823).
17. Edward Blaquière, *Die Griechische Revolution; Ihr Anfang und weitere Verbreitung nebst einigen Bemerkungen Über Religion, Nationalcharacter usw. der Griechen; aus dem Englishen ubers.* (Weimar: Verlag des Gr. H. S. privil. Landes-Industrie-Comptoirs, 1825).
18. Colonel Leicester Stanhope (Earl of Harrington), *Greece in 1823 and 1824; Being a Series of Letters and Other Documents on the Greek Revolution Written During a Visit to that Country* (London: Sherwood, Gilbert, and Piper, 1825).
19. William Parry, *The Last Days of Lord Byron: With His Lordship's Opinions on Various Subjects, Particularly on the State and Prospects of Greece* (London: Knight and Lacey, 1825).
20. Stanhope, *Greece in 1823 and 1824,* 6–7.
21. Ibid., 12–13.
22. Jeremy Bentham, *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, ed. John Bowring (New York: Russell & Russell, l962), vol. 10, 538–39.
23. See Bentham, *Works,* vol. 4, 535–93, which contains the Codification Proposal addressed by Jeremy Bentham to All Nations Professing Liberal Opinions; or Idea of a Proposed All-Comprehensive Body of Law. This proposal also includes a section of "testimonials," which contains some of Bentham's correspondence with these liberal groups.
24. Parry, *The Last Days of Lord Byron*, 189.
25. Stanhope, *Greece in 1823 and 1824*, 89.
26. Ibid., 89–90.
27. Parry, *The Last Days of Lord Byron*, 188.
28. Ibid., 190.
29. Ibid., 33.
30. Stanhope, *Greece in 1823 and 1824,* 97.
31. Parry, *The Last Days of Lord Byron,* 199.
32. Ibid., 201.
33. Ibid., 202.
34. Ibid., 227.
35. In *Bentham, Byron, and Greece*, Frederick Rosen argues that Parry exaggerated the conflict between Bentham and Byron, but certainly Stanhope,

also, testifies to that conflict. Frederick Rosen, *Bentham, Byron, and Greece: Constitutionalism, Nationalism, and Early Liberal Political Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992) 10, 185–218.
36. Stanhope, *Greece in 1823 and 1824,* v.
37. Ibid., xi.
38. Ibid., x.
39. John Stuart Mill, *Mill on Bentham and Coleridge*, with Introduction by F. R. Leavis (New York: Harper and Row, 1950), 62–63.
40. Parry, *The Last Days of Lord Byron,* 134.
41. Ibid., 169–70.
42. Ibid., 133.
43. Ibid., 172–73.
44. Ibid., 173.
45. Stanhope, *Greece in 1823 and 1824,* 31–32.
46. Parry, *The Last Days of Lord Byron,* 173.
47. Ibid., 174.
48. Ibid., 178.
49. Ibid., 174.
50. Elise von Keudell and Werner Deetjen, ed., *Goethe als Benutzer der Weimarer Bibliothek, ein Verzeichnis der von Ihm entliehenen Werke* (hereafter *Goethe als Benutzer*) (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1931), 258–61.
51. Gräf, pt. II, vol. II, 319.
52. Biedermann, III, 209.
53. Gräf, pt. II, vol. II, 319.
54. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Goethes Briefe*, ed. Karl Robert Mandelkow (Hamburg: Christian Wegner Verlag, 1967) IV, 146.
55. Biedermann, III, 210.
56. Parry, *The Last Days of Lord Byron*, 174.
57. Biedermann, IV, 203, 244, 271.
58. Ibid., 271.
59. Biedermann, IV, 254 (March 28, 1830).
60. Ibid., II, 205.
61. Ibid., III, 327.
62. Ibid., 328.
63. Ibid., 327.
64. Leonard Krieger, *The German Idea of Freedom: History of a Political Tradition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 18.
65. Ibid., 19.
66. Biedermann, III, 328.
67. Ibid.
68. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust Part Two*, (hereafter *Faust Two*) trans. Philip Wayne (Baltimore, MA: Penguin Books, 1959), 104.
69. Ibid., 106–7.
70. Ibid., 159.
71. Ibid., 163.
72. Ibid., 167.
73. Ibid., 169.

74. My translation, lines 8915–16. Hereafter when translating from the German original, I will indicate that by including the line numbers in the text.
75. Ibid., 172.
76. Ibid., 186.
77. Ibid., 187.
78. Ibid., 190.
79. Ibid., 192–93, lines 9462–65.
80. Ibid., 193, lines 9474–75.
81. Ibid., l93, lines 9478–82.
82. Ibid., 202, lines 9711–14.
83. Ibid., 205–6, lines 9821–25.
84. Ibid., 206, lines 9843–50.
85. Ibid., 208 lines 9893–94.
86. Biedermann, III, 163 (February 24, 1825).
87. Ibid., 407 (July 5, 1827).
88. *Faust Two*, 207, lines 9863–66.
89. Ibid., 221, lines 10215–21.
90. Ibid., 267 lines 11499–501.
91. Ibid., 258, line 11246.
92. Ibid., 269, lines 11563–64, 11569–70, 11574–76, 11579–80.
93. *Faust Two*, 250, lines 11035–36. Goethe had originally intended to include a scene involving Faust's formal investiture with the fief. See Dierdre Vincent, "'Die Tat ist alles': A Reconsideration of the Significance of Faust II, Act Four," *Seminar; Journal of Germanic Studies* 18, no. 2 (May 1982): 127, 133.
94. Vincent, "'Die Tat ist alles,'" 140.
95. Biedermann, III, 313.
96. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, [*Faust, 2. Theil, 2. Abth.*], *Goethes Werke / Hrsg. Im Auftr. Der Großherzogin Sophie Von Sachsen* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1999), vol. 15, pt.2, 65., (hereafter Weimar Edition).
97. Karl August Meissinger, *Helena, Schillers Anteil am Faust* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Gerhard Schulte-Bulmke, 1935), 74–75.
98. Ibid., 53.
99. Ibid., 79.
100. Alexander R. Hohlfeld, "Die Entstehung des Faust-Manuscript Von 1825–26 (VH2)," *Euphorion Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte*, Dritte Folge, 49 (1955): 291.
101. Ibid., 285–86.
102. *Faust Two*, 269; Hohlfeld, "Die Entstehung des Faust-Manuscript," 284–86; the manuscript fragments are given and described in Weimar Edition vol. 15, pt. 2, 147, l57.
103. There are three fragments bearing on this line, and in this case, where the evidence happens to reveal the order of composition, only the last one contains the freedom reference. Weimar Edition, vol. 15, pt. 2, 147, 154. How much earlier the early fragments are remains an open question, but Hohlfeld, "Die Entstehung des Faust-Manuscript," 297, shows that the revisions must have been made after 1825.
104. Biedermann, V, 244.

105. Ibid., IV, 80–81.
106. John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1957), chapter V, particularly pp. 99–100, 104–5, 109; John Stuart Mill, *Essays on Politics and Culture*, ed. Gertrude Himmelfarb (Garden City, New York, Doubleday, 1963), l24–33, 146.
107. Sigmund Freud, "Dissection of the Personality," in *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis and Other Works*, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and tr. James Strachey et al. (London: Hogarth, 1953–74), vol. 22, 80.

2 Freedom in Architecture: Gottfried Semper and the Greek Ideal

1. Gottfried Semper, *Vorläufige Bemerkungen Über Bemalte Architectur Und Plastik Bei Den Alten*, (Altona: Johann Friedrich Hammerich, 1834), title page.
2. For more on Winckelmann, see the editors' introduction.
3. Wilhelm Dilthey, "The Three Epochs of Modern Aesthetics and its Present Task," trans. Michael Neville, (originally published in 1892) *Selected Works*, vol. 5 *Poetry and Experience*, ed. Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 190, 204.
4. Martin Fröhlich, *Gottfried Semper Zeichnerischer Nachlass an Der Eth Zürich, Kritischer Katalog* (Basel and Stuttgart: Birkhäuser Verlag, 1974), 13.
5. Gottfried Semper, "Reiseerinnerungen aus Griechenland," *Kleine Schriften*, ed. Manfred and Hans Semper (Berlin and Stuttgart: W. Spemann, 1884), 438.
6. Ibid., 441.
7. Ibid.
8. Gottfried Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Wolfgang Herrmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 12.
9. Semper, "Reiseerinnerungen," 429.
10. Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, 12; Fröhlich, *Gottfried Semper Zeichnerischer Nachlass an Der ETH Zurich*, 215.
11. Gottfried Semper, *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Kunsten oder praktische Aesthetik: Ein Handbuch fur Techniker, Kunstler, und Kunstfreunde* (Munich, 2d ed.: Friedrich Bruckmann's Verlag, 1878), 482.
12. Semper, *Der Stil*, plates I, V, and IX.
13. Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, 66.
14. Ibid., 64.
15. Ibid., 51.
16. Ibid., 51–52.
17. Ibid., 52. Semper did not use the term *Gesamtkunstwerk* in this publication.
18. Jack Stein, *Richard Wagner & The Synthesis of the Arts* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1960), 5; Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, 52; Carl Frieddrich Glasenapp, *Das Leben Richard Wagners* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1905), 119–20.

19. Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, 57.
20. Ibid., 47.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., 49.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., 54.
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31. Ibid., 3, 14.
32. Ibid., 14, 290–91.
33. Ibid., 66.
34. Semper, *Der Stil*, 205.
35. Ibid., 206.
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37. Ibid., 206.
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47. Ibid., 78.
48. Ibid., 52.
49. Henry Liddell, George Scott Robert, Henry Stuart Jones, Roderick McKenzie, and E. A. Barber (eds.), *A Greek-English Lexicon*, revised and augumented throughout by Sir Henry Stuart Jones, with the assistance of Roderick McKenzie and with the cooperation of many scholars (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 122.
50. Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, 78.
51. Ibid., 122.
52. Ibid., 78.
53. Ibid., 122–23.
54. Ibid., 123.
55. Ibid.
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57. William J. McGrath, "Freedom and Death," in *Rediscovering History: Culture, Politics, and the Psyche*, ed. Michael Roth (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 106.
58. Semper, *Der Stil*, 413. This reference to one of Richard Wagner's most well-known essays, paid tribute to the friendship between the two men, and it testified to their similar hopes that Greek art could provide lessons for

the renewal of art in their own time. Wagner's own theories on art and freedom drew on Semper's work, and by using a Wagnerian aesthetic term synonymous with revolutionary change in art, Semper emphasized the revolutionary departure that Greek art made from its foreign roots by its spiritualization of a profoundly materialistic tradition.

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67. Ibid.; See also note 51 in Chapter 4, below.
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69. Ibid., 216–17.
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74. Richard Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, ed. Golther Wolfgang (Berlin: Deutsches Verlagshaus Bong & Co., 1913), vol. 6, 273; vol. 10, 93. (hereafter, *GS*).
75. Petzet, 311, and illustration 756 provides a floor plan for the Crystal Palace theater; Fröhlich, *Gottfried Semper Zeichnerischer Nachlass an der ETH Zurich*, 81, gives a full colored frontal elevation of it.
76. Manfred Semper, *Das München er Festspielhaus, Gottfried Semper und Richard Wagner* (Hamburg: Verlag von Conrad H. A. Kloss, 1906), 107–8 (hereafter, *Festspielhaus*).
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3 From Political Freedom to Self-Denial: Wagner's *Ring* and the Revolutions of 1848

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5 From Self-Denial to Political Freedom: The Odyssey of Thomas Mann

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